

Official Report of the  
One Hundred Sixty-eighth  
Semiannual General

# CONFERENCE

of The Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints

held in the Tabernacle  
Salt Lake City, Utah

October 3 and 4, 1998



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# Report of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 10:00 A.M.

The general sessions of the conference were held at 10:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4, 1998. The general priesthood session was held on Saturday, October 3, at 6:00 P.M.

President Gordon B. Hinckley presided at all sessions of the conference and conducted the Saturday morning, general priesthood, and Sunday morning sessions. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Saturday afternoon session. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the Sunday afternoon session.

The conference was carried by satellite transmission to thousands of Church buildings in many countries. In areas that did not receive this transmission, videotapes of the conference were sent to local distribution centers and made available to all Church units. In addition, television and radio stations and the LDS Radio Network carried portions or all of the general sessions to large audiences throughout North America.

## General Authorities present

The following General Authorities of the Church attended one or more of the sessions:

*The First Presidency:* Gordon B. Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and James E. Faust

*The Quorum of the Twelve:* Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott,

Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring

*The Presidency of the Seventy:* L. Aldin Porter, Joe J. Christensen, Harold G. Hillam, Earl C. Tingey, D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorensen

*The First Quorum of the Seventy:* Angel Abrea, Carlos H. Amado, Neil L. Andersen, Dallas N. Archibald, Ben B. Banks, Merrill J. Bateman, William R. Bradford, Monte J. Brough, F. Enzo Busche, John K. Carmack, Sheldon F. Child, Gary J. Coleman, Spencer J. Condie, Gene R. Cook, Quentin L. Cook, Robert K. Dellenbach, John B. Dickson, Charles Didier, Loren C. Dunn, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Jack H. Goasling, John H. Groberg, Bruce C. Hafen, F. Melvin Hammond, W. Eugene Hansen, F. Burton Howard, Jay E. Jensen, Kenneth Johnson, L. Lionel Kendrick, Wm. Rolfe Kerr, Yoshihiko Kikuchi, Cree-L. Kofford, John M. Madsen, Lynn A. Mickelsen, Alexander B. Morrison, Dennis B. Neuenschwander, Glenn L. Pace, James M. Paramore, Andrew W. Peterson, Rex D. Pinegar, Hugh W. Pinnock, Ronald E. Poelman, Carl B. Pratt, Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Francisco J. Viñas, and W. Craig Zwick

*The Second Quorum of the Seventy:* Richard D. Allred, Athos M. Amorim, E. Ray Bateman, L. Edward Brown, Eran A. Call, Val R. Christensen, Richard E. Cook, Claudio R. M. Costa, Duane B. Gerrard, Ronald T. Halverson, Wayne M. Hancock, J. Kent Jolley, W. Don Ladd, James O. Mason, Richard J. Maynes, Dale E. Miller, Earl M. Monson, Merrill C. Oaks, Bruce D. Porter, H. Bryan Richards, Lynn G. Robbins, Ned B. Roueché, Dennis E. Simmons, Donald L. Staheli, Jerald L. Taylor, D. Lee Tobler, Richard E. Turley Sr., Gordon T. Watts, Stephen A. West, Robert J. Whetten,

Lance B. Wickman, Richard B. Wirthlin, and Ray H. Wood

*The Presiding Bishopric:* H. David Burton, Richard C. Edgley, and Keith B. McMullin

### Other authorities present

Other Church authorities in attendance included general, area, stake, and ward officers.

## SATURDAY MORNING SESSION

The first session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 10:00 A.M. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by the Mormon Youth Chorus, with Robert C. Bowden conducting and Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

To begin the meeting, the chorus sang "I Need Thee Every Hour." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

My dear brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the first general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All of the General Authorities are in attendance except Elder Andrew W. Peterson, who will be in attendance at later sessions.

We acknowledge the General Authorities seated on the stand at the overflow locations in the nearby Assembly Hall and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building.

We likewise acknowledge the Relief Society, Young Men, Young Women, Sunday School, and Primary general presidencies seated on the stand in the Tabernacle.

We extend a warm and special welcome this morning to government, education, and civic leaders who are present with us.

The music for this session will be given by the Mormon Youth Chorus, under the direction of Brother Robert C. Bowden, with Sister Bonnie Goodliffe at the organ.

The chorus opened this session by singing "I Need Thee Every Hour" and will now favor us with "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Glenn L. Pace of the Seventy.

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The chorus sang "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Elder Glenn L. Pace offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

I will say a few words, and then we will be pleased to hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Welcome to conference

My brothers and sisters, we welcome you most warmly. We welcome you to this great conference. There are some 6,000 of us here in the Tabernacle and millions more in other halls across the world. We are all one great family. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. In fulfillment of the words of Peter, we are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

For the most part, we are a happy people. We are mindful of and continue to pray for those who are experiencing hardship due to natural or man-caused calamity. But even those among our number who are bowed down with sorrow and pain go forward in faith with the certain assurance that God lives and is watching over His children.

The Tabernacle this morning is filled. Once it was considered very large and commodious. Now, with the growth of the Church, it will not accommodate our people. I was in the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, only two weeks ago for a regional conference. We had somewhere in the neighborhood of 20,000 people in attendance—three times as many as we can get into this building.

### Construction of new assembly building

I am deeply grateful that we are moving forward with construction of a wonderful new facility adjoining Temple Square on the block to the north of us. It is an immense structure. I am grateful that we have followed the promptings to build it. I believe that the Lord would have us do so and that He has revealed His will in this undertaking.

Workmen are working on the placement of the huge king beam, which marks the beginning of the roof structure. Things are moving forward according to schedule. Six hundred people are at work on the project now, and this number will grow.

The building will seat some 21,000, plus 1,000 in the theater which will be a part of it. Through the generations that lie ahead, it will ring with the voices of the prophets. It will be primarily a house of worship. But it will also be a place of art. There will be concerts and other public offerings that will be uplifting and wholesome and spiritual. Barring some unforeseen circumstances, the building will be ready for the general conference of April in the year 2000. It will be a gift to the Master, whose birth we will commemorate at that season.

### Church members are one great family

As we contemplate these things, we think of our brothers and sisters in distant lands. We have met hundreds of thousands of you, have looked into your faces, have felt of your spirits. You are so very precious to this work. The Lord has gathered you "one of a city, and two of a family," as prophesied by Jeremiah. He is teaching you with pastors after His own heart. (See Jeremiah 3:14-15.) We pray for you, we visit you, we respect and admire you, we love you. We are all part of a great family—10 million strong—worshiping with one heart and one voice at the feet of our Master, the Son of God.

Wherever you are, no matter how distant, you have the opportunity of participating in this conference. You will receive it by satellite in very many places. You will receive it by videotape in some places that cannot be reached by satellite. And for a few in faraway places, you will have it as the written word in our Church magazines.

No matter where we are, no matter our circumstances, we all can be faithful Latter-day Saints. We can pray and worship the Lord in the privacy of our own closet. We can sing anthems of praise to the Almighty even when we are alone. We can study the scriptures. We can live the gospel. We can pay our tithes and offerings though the amount be ever so small. We can walk in faith. We can strive to live lives patterned after the life of our Master.

Now, brothers and sisters, I invite all of you to listen to those whom you have sustained as General Authorities and general officers of the Church, as with prayer and faith and in humility, testimony is borne to you. May we all be inspired together. May our hearts be lifted in praise to our Redeemer, I humbly pray in His holy name, even the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder M. Russell Ballard

### Extraordinary temple-building effort

At our last general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley made the historic announcement that 30 or more smaller temples will be constructed throughout the world. The first of those smaller temples was dedicated this summer in Monticello, Utah. As you know, President Hinckley's stated goal is to have at least 100 temples in operation by the end of this century. Knowing the President as I do, I am sure that goal will be met, if not exceeded!

President Hinckley has referred to this extraordinary temple-building effort as "a tremendous undertaking. Nothing even approaching it has ever been tried before."<sup>1</sup> Ever since this stunning announcement, I have thought what great confidence the Lord and His prophet have in you and me. How much responsibility now rests upon all of us to prepare ourselves and others to be worthy of the blessings of these holy temples.

The Brethren have long been aware that many of our members live in areas of the world quite distant from the closest temple. Their hearts are true, they have great faith concerning the mission of the Church, and they love the Lord and want to do His will. What a blessing these beautiful temples will be to these dedicated Saints.

Again quoting President Hinckley: "If temple ordinances are an essential part of the restored gospel, and I testify that they are, then we must provide the means by which they can be accomplished. . . . The temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer."<sup>2</sup>

### An urgency in the work

There is an urgency in this work that motivates us to extend the blessings of the temple to as many of our Heavenly Father's children as possible. I was impressed with an experience of President Wilford Woodruff when he told of a visitation he received from the Prophet Joseph Smith some time after the Prophet was martyred. According to President Woodruff's account: "[Joseph Smith] came to me and spoke to me. He said he could not stop to talk with me because he was in a hurry. The next man I met was Father Smith; he could not talk with me because he was in a hurry. I met half a dozen brethren who had held high positions on earth, and none of them could stop to talk with me because they were in a hurry. I was much astonished. By and by I saw the Prophet again and I got the privilege of asking him a question.

"'Now,' said I, 'I want to know why you are in a hurry. I have been in a hurry

all my life; but I expected my hurry would be over when I got into the kingdom of heaven, if I ever did.'

"Joseph said: 'I will tell you, Brother Woodruff. Every dispensation that has had the priesthood on the earth and has gone into the celestial kingdom has had a certain amount of work to do to prepare to go to the earth with the Savior when he goes to reign on the earth. Each dispensation has had ample time to do this work. We have not. We are the last dispensation, and so much work has to be done, and we need to be in a hurry . . . to accomplish it.'

"Of course, that was satisfactory," President Woodruff concluded, "but it was new doctrine to me."<sup>3</sup>

Other latter-day prophets have been similarly motivated to move us along more quickly in accomplishing the significant work of this last great dispensation. President David O. McKay encouraged every member to be a missionary.<sup>4</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball urged us to "lengthen our stride."<sup>5</sup> President Howard W. Hunter affirmed, "We are at a time in the history of the world and the growth of the Church when we must think more of holy things and act more like the Savior would expect his disciples to act."<sup>6</sup>

And now President Gordon B. Hinckley is asking us to carry on, to do better, to do more. He said: "We have work to do, you and I, so very much of it. Let us roll up our sleeves and get at it, with a new commitment, putting our trust in the Lord. . . . We can do it, if we will be prayerful and faithful."<sup>7</sup>

### **Are we keeping pace?**

Clearly the power of the Lord is moving on the leaders of the Church, nudging them with the same urgency that seemed to be motivating Joseph Smith in Wilford Woodruff's vision. President Hinckley is doing all that he can do to accelerate the work. He is trav-

eling the world to an unprecedented degree to strengthen and edify the Saints and to urge them upward and onward. He has made himself available to the world media in order to share the message of the Restoration with the widest possible audience. And he is overseeing the most extensive era of temple building in history in an attempt to speed up our ability to accomplish the overwhelming amount of work we have been assigned to complete in this dispensation of time.

Our President is dynamically out in front, showing the way. The question we must all ask ourselves is, "Are we keeping pace with him?" Each one of us must be prepared to answer that question. I can assure you that it is a subject of considerable discussion among the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. I hope the same is true of every council in every ward and stake in the Church. This is not the time to relax or to coast in our callings. Every council of the Church should be working together on ways to be more effective in preparing our members to be worthy to enjoy all the blessings of the Church and especially the blessings of the temple.

### **We must work harder and smarter**

We are rapidly approaching a time when the number of operating temples throughout the world will be double what it was just four short years ago. Now is a good time to ask, *stake presidents* and *bishops*, what are your stake and ward councils doing to fill these temples with worthy members and sufficient dedicated workers? Are your priesthood quorums functioning at peak efficiency? Are the home and visiting teachers involved in serving those families to whom they are assigned? Are your auxiliaries actively building faith and testimonies? Are the activities in your stake and ward aimed at strengthening the family and every member? Are

you carefully coordinating the proselytizing efforts with the stake and full-time missionaries, helping them find, teach, and baptize many more people? Are your councils concerning themselves with helping every new convert and less-active member become fully fellowshiped and completely anchored to the doctrines of the Church?

Brothers and sisters, there is much to be done by us to complete the work assigned by the Lord to this dispensation. We must focus our work, and we must work smarter if we are to accomplish our role in preparing all Church members to receive their temple blessings. Church leaders, both men and women, can and must extend the length of their reach and broaden the power of their influence. We must be wise to protect and teach our own families first and then take full advantage of the inspired Church council system to achieve greater success in the work Heavenly Father has given us to do, within the time frame He has given us to do it.

#### **Use ward council to nurture converts**

Take, for example, the critical role of the ward council in fellowshiping every convert and activating those who are less active. As each member now knows, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are greatly concerned over the well-being of every new and less-active member of the Church. No ward or branch council should allow a new convert to feel insecure in his newly embraced Church membership. And yet there are still too many of them who do not feel warmly welcomed.

Recently a new member wrote to me: "Sometimes I . . . feel like it was a mistake for me to be baptized. I know this Church is true, and I have a strong testimony, but I still question. . . . When I was investigating, everyone from my ward was always there for me and always wanted to talk to me and always wanted

to help me out. . . . Since I was baptized it's like they don't even notice when I go to church or when I don't. I hardly hear from anybody. . . . I just can't understand why the people in my ward have just forgotten me. I feel so lonely and confused. . . . I can't talk to my bishop because . . . we aren't close at all. He didn't even remember me when I went back to church. Please help me if you can."

Brothers and sisters, while wonderful progress has been made, the time has come when we must marshal every resource to fellowship every convert and bless the lives of many more of our Heavenly Father's children. This can best be accomplished when ward council members see that each organization does its part to make sure new members have friends, have an assignment, and are nourished by the good word of God. Every soul is very precious to our Heavenly Father. We must never forget that through the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ paid a great price for the redemption of each one of us. His suffering must not be in vain because we fail to nurture and teach those who are striving to be active in the Church.

#### **Use councils to bless individual lives**

You sisters can help build personal testimony in the lives of every woman, young woman, and child in the ward. How grateful we are for your strength. Sisters, talk together in your councils about how to love, support, and teach each other the beautiful blessings and promises of the gospel. How wonderful it would be if every woman in the world understood her true destiny as expressed in the Young Women theme. You know the words: "We are daughters of our Heavenly Father who loves us, and we love him. We will stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . ." as we strive to live the Young Women Values, which are—Faith, Divine Nature, Individual Worth,

Knowledge, Choice and Accountability, Good Works, and Integrity.”<sup>8</sup> Learning of and acting upon these values will save and bless both young and older women.

You members of the bishopric and Young Men presidency, get close to each young man and help him to be worthy to be ordained at the assigned age to the appropriate priesthood. This is a significant part of your work and the work of all the members of the ward council. No boy should start out as a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood and fail to be ordained an elder and invited to serve a full-time mission.

Melchizedek Priesthood quorums are responsible for the spiritual and temporal welfare of *all* men and their *families*. Much of the work among the families of the ward that is currently being done by members of the bishopric could appropriately be performed by the men of the Melchizedek Priesthood if properly discussed and coordinated in council meetings.

Stake presidents and bishops, if your councils are not focused and functioning at this increased level of spiritual power and direction, then please do all you can to ensure that they understand how to combine all of the resources to spiritually prepare your people.

### **Examine commitment to the gospel**

Similarly, we as individuals and families need to counsel together to carefully examine ourselves and our personal and family commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This examination is particularly essential to those of us who have made covenants of consecration and sacrifice in the house of the Lord. We need to ask ourselves: Are we setting an example of Christian virtue and gospel faithfulness in our lives and in our homes? Are we reaching out to *our* inactive and nonmember friends, family members, and neighbors with loving

concern? Are we boldly sharing our testimonies?

I know the power of inspired men and women who unitedly strive to strengthen families and individual members of the Church. Please fully utilize your combined ability to bless the lives of every person—man or woman, teenager or child, member or nonmember—who lives within the ward boundaries. Brothers and sisters, let us unite as never before to do our part, individually and collectively, to prepare our people to receive the blessings that can be given only in the house of the Lord.

### **Focus on things that matter most**

This is our day, brothers and sisters. It is a time that has been foreseen by holy prophets since the world began. It is the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the final scenes of this world's history will be played out. Our latter-day prophets, from Joseph Smith to Gordon B. Hinckley, have warned us of the solemn, sobering obligation that is ours to prepare for “the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”<sup>9</sup> That day is steadily moving toward us, and there is still much to be done. We must be prepared to keep pace with our leaders, stride for their every lengthened stride. Perhaps as never before we need to focus our efforts on those things that matter most and avoid spending time on those things of small concern and of little consequence.

Said the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. . . .

“Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand. . . . Let us, . . . as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy tem-

ple . . . a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance."<sup>10</sup>

I pray that we may join together, brothers and sisters, to do our part to prepare every family, adult, youth, and child to ultimately be worthy to receive every temple blessing that the gospel provides. I bear my witness that the Lord Jesus Christ lives; it is through Him that the eternal ordinances of the temple come to the faithful members of the Church. May the Lord bless us with the desire, the wisdom, and the commitment to enthusiastically move this great work forward in our families and in the Church, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115–16; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
3. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (1946), 288–89.
4. See Conference Report, Apr. 1959, 122.
5. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (1982), 174.
6. In Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 87.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 117; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 88.
8. *Young Women Leadership Handbook* (1995), 4.
9. Malachi 4:5.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 128:22, 24.

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The chorus sang "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

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#### President Hinckley

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has spoken to us, and the choir has sung "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Bishop H. David Burton, the Presiding Bishop of the Church. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

## Bishop H. David Burton

#### A season of opportunity

In a recent sacrament meeting, a lovely young lady suggested that a good talk should begin with a little tasteful humor or an outrageous falsehood. My ability to convey humor is virtually nonexistent, but I can say with deep sincerity that I feel perfectly comfortable and free of fear as I stand at this podium.

As our recent sesquicentennial celebration concluded, our beloved prophet refocused our attention when he said: "The time has now come to turn about and face the future. This is a season of a thousand opportunities. It is ours to grasp and move forward. What a wonderful time it is for each of us to do his or her small part in moving the work of

the Lord on to its magnificent destiny" (Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 67).

All of us face challenges in our daily lives. Yet in challenges lie some of our greatest opportunities. As we recognize and act on our opportunities, progress, happiness, and spiritual growth follow. We need to be involved in moving the Lord's work forward. Though the opportunities available to us are endless, may I suggest just a few.

#### A season to reverence the Sabbath day

Over and over again we have been reminded from this pulpit to fully observe the Sabbath day. If we are not

keeping the Sabbath day holy, today is a wonderful time to commit to seize that opportunity, to receive the promised blessings that come from Sabbath day observance.

Many have come to feel that the terms "Sabbath day" and "play day" are synonymous. A friend who manages several small retail outlets in predominantly LDS communities tells me he can precisely tell when Sunday worship services conclude because customer counts increase dramatically. Recreation in its various forms has become "king of the Sabbath day."

When Sister Burton and I were first married, we lived in the southeast part of the Salt Lake Valley. On occasion, as we purchased groceries from a small neighborhood store, we observed President and Sister Joseph Fielding Smith in the same store making their purchases. After several such observations, I finally mustered the courage to inquire of President Smith why it was he traveled all the way from downtown, past a dozen grocery stores, to shop at this particular store. Looking over the tops of his glasses he emphatically said, "Son! [He had my immediate attention.] Sister Smith and I patronize establishments that keep the Sabbath day holy."

The need to reverence the Sabbath day is not new counsel. We are only being told today what prior generations have been told by the prophets of their day and reconfirmed countless times by the prophets of our day. Latter-day scripture contains the following admonition:

"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

"For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High" (D&C 59:9-10).

Now, I know it's hard, particularly for our young people, to choose to observe the Sabbath day when athletic teams on which they so much want to participate regularly schedule games on Sunday. I too know it seems trivial to many who are in need of just a few items on the Sabbath to quickly stop at a convenience store to make a Sunday purchase. But I also know that remembering to keep the Sabbath day holy is one of the most important commandments we can observe in preparing us to be the recipients of the whisperings of the Spirit.

This is the season of opportunity for families to stand tall and be counted among the faithful who obey the fourth great commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (Exodus 20:8-10).

### **A season of temple service**

A few years ago, President Hinckley responded to an observation concerning the number of temple dedications or rededications in which he had participated during his tenure as a General Authority. He indicated that it was his desire to continue to be involved in dedicating temples at least until we have 100 operating temples. As I heard this statement, I couldn't help doing a little simple math and realized that the sum of the number representing current operating temples and the number representing the temple projects then in design or construction was far less than 100. Because the Presiding Bishopric has the responsibility to oversee the construction of temples as they are announced, I remember very vividly saying to the prophet, "President, I pray the Lord will bless you with great longevity."

Little did I know that perhaps even at that time our prophet was being

prompted from the heavens to consider ways to provide more opportunities for worthy Latter-day Saint families to participate in the blessings associated with temple worship. I wept and rejoiced as you did last April in general conference when we heard President Hinckley say:

"In recent months we have traveled far out among the membership of the Church. I have been with many who have very little of this world's goods. But they have in their hearts a great burning faith concerning this latter-day work. They love the Church. . . . They love the Lord and want to do His will. They are paying their tithing, modest as it is. They make tremendous sacrifices to visit the temples. They travel for days at a time in cheap buses and on old boats. They save their money and do without to make it all possible.

"They need nearby temples. . . .

"Accordingly, I take this opportunity to announce to the entire Church a program to construct some 30 smaller temples immediately. . . .

"These will be in addition to the 17 buildings now going forward. . . . This will make a total of 47 new temples in addition to the 51 now in operation. I think we had better add 2 more to make it an even 100 by the end of this century" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 87-88).

Early in this dispensation our forefathers were blessed with the opportunity of sacrificing mightily to build temples. They offered generously of their meager financial means as well as the fruits of their physical labor. As temples were completed in Kirtland and later in Nauvoo, the sacrifice of the Saints was great. They were blessed as they responded. After the migration of the Saints to the tops of the mountains, temples began to appear in a number of locations in the West. Each temple project represented great sacrifice. Divinely promised blessings awaited those who availed them-

selves of the opportunity to participate in building temples.

The season of opportunity that awaits us today in temple service is different from that of the past. We are not expected to pound nails, carve stone, mill lumber, pour concrete, or physically participate in the construction of temples. We are, however, extended a marvelous opportunity to faithfully pay our tithes so temple construction and the work of the Lord may go forward. We are also challenged to be worthy to offer ourselves in the service of providing sacred saving ordinances for those who have preceded us. Very simply stated, the great opportunity of Latter-day Saint families is to see that the lights of our temples burn early and late in the day. Perhaps we could create the need for them to burn all night as they do presently on weekends in several temples.

### A season to reach out

A few years ago a major communications company used in its advertising the phrase "Reach out and touch someone." President Hinckley has reminded us repeatedly of the many opportunities to reach out and touch someone. In speaking of those who have recently joined with us, he described a need to reach out and touch them with love and fellowship; to those who are estranged, a touch of encouragement, unconditional love, and a full measure of forgiveness if required; to our neighbors, associates, and friends who are not of our faith, the blessing of being touched by the Holy Spirit because of our words and deeds.

In a recent training meeting for stake and ward councils held as a part of a stake conference I attended, well-prepared presentations centered on the opportunities to be "inclusive" rather than "exclusive" in reaching out and touching new and less-active individuals, as well as those not members of our Church.

Sister Laura Chipman, a stake Young Women president, suggested five *I*'s to help us to be inclusive in our outreach. They are: (1) *Introspection*—Are we inadvertently communicating an exclusionary attitude? (2) *Identify*—Do we know the recently baptized, the less active, or nonmembers who reside in our neighborhoods and communities? (3) *Individualize*—Do we seek to know the interests, talents, and skills of those we wish to fellowship? (4) *Invite*—Do we include neighbors and friends in appropriate activities? (5) *Involve*—Are there ways we can utilize the skills, talents, and abilities of those we wish to include?

### **Blessings of reaching out**

I recently attended the funeral for one of my boyhood friends. This brother was genetically challenged from birth. He could understand concepts quite well but could not read or write. His speech was limited to a very few identifiable words, along with a jargon all of his own. Some in our group could recognize a few words he spoke. However, we could usually tell from the tone of his words whether he was expressing his concerns or his great capacity to love. Much of Lynn's early life was spent in a special school away from home. He spent his summers and many holidays at home with his family. For the past 17 years, Lynn, who outlived all of his family, lived in a care center where his many needs could best be met.

Upon Lynn's death, one of his special friends arranged a funeral to be held in the meetinghouse we attended as boys. Present at the funeral were his dear friends, the staff from the care center, a few ward members who remembered him from many years ago, and about a dozen boyhood friends and their families. Several brethren who had stayed close to Lynn during his long, often lonesome stay at the care center offered tender remarks.

All of our memories were refreshed during the course of the service. One friend recalled that on one occasion our Sunday School teacher invited us to bear our testimonies in class. As he sequentially called upon us, he passed over Lynn, perhaps feeling he could not respond with understanding. With all the righteous indignation Lynn could muster, he let the teacher know he expected his opportunity to express himself. Though we didn't understand much of what he said, we felt his love and the depth of a great spirit tragically locked in a body that could not fully function. The spirit in that class was very strong!

As the staff and the special friends from the care center expressed their unconditional love, it was very evident that Lynn, in his humble way, had reached out and touched their lives. During the course of the funeral, it was apparent that at least three of our boyhood friends and their families had reached out to minister to Lynn in ways that included regular visits, long automobile rides, invitations to dinners on special occasions, and birthday parties.

When the stories and recollections were complete, we all realized that our physically challenged, loving angel of a friend had given us and the wonderful compassionate families who reached out so often in love, far more of real value than he had ever received.

Yes, today is indeed a season of many opportunities. It is a season to reach out to touch the life of someone, a season to commit to keeping the Sabbath day holy, and a season to help keep the lights of our temples burning brightly, to name just a very few. I testify of a living Father in Heaven and of His Son, our Savior and our Redeemer, both who love us unconditionally and are anxious for us to seize the many opportunities They have provided. I acknowledge and express my love to our dear prophet, who, with great devotion, carries our banner with cour-

age and majesty. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
 "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

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## Sister Virginia U. Jensen

### Love and reverence for prophets

One evening when I was 11 years old, I heard a commotion outside my window. I looked out the window, and in the street were newsboys carrying stacks of newspapers in their arms announcing the news that President George Albert Smith, the eighth President of the Church, had died. President Smith had been the only prophet I had known in my short time on earth. It was during his administration that I first felt the stirrings of a testimony, and even then I knew how important God's prophets are. I had been taught in Primary and in my home by loving parents that President Smith was our earthly link to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, that They could talk to me through him. What an empowering concept for a young girl! The Spirit had confirmed in my 11-year-old mind that this was true. When I learned of his death, I felt a tremendous loss.

However, just five days after President Smith's death, President David O. McKay stood in this tabernacle and spoke to those assembled. He had just been unanimously sustained as the prophet, seer, and revelator by the Saints. As he brushed back the tears, he said: "No one can preside over this Church without first being in tune with the head of the Church, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our head. This is his Church. . . . With his guidance, with his inspiration, we cannot fail."<sup>1</sup>

### President Hinckley

We will now be pleased to hear from Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency. She will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

I quickly came to love and revere President McKay just as I had loved and revered President Smith. In fact, I remember seeing him stand at this pulpit, with his white hair gleaming, and thinking he looked just like an angel.

### "Come, listen to a prophet's voice"

Prophets ancient and modern were and are giants of the Lord, chosen and ordained before they came to this earth. Our prophets are men whom the Lord has raised up specifically to preside over the Church for the particular time in which they have served. The Lord is working through the leaders of His Church today, just as He has always done in the past.

President Wilford Woodruff said, "If we had before us every revelation which God ever gave to man . . . and they were piled up here a hundred feet high, the Church and kingdom of God could not grow, in this or any other age of the world, without the living oracles of God."<sup>2</sup>

Brothers and sisters, listen to the instructions and promise found in the Doctrine and Covenants:

"Wherefore, . . . thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."<sup>3</sup>

The Lord's will to Abraham was not sufficient for the people of Moses' time. The will of the Lord to Moses was not sufficient for the people of Isaiah's time. Different dispensations required different instructions. That is true today. The dispensation in which we now live is a dispensation into which the knowledge of all other dispensations of the gospel has merged. What a blessing it is for us to live in this time when the fulness of the gospel is ours to bless our lives.

I would like to extend to all within the sound of my voice today an invitation previously written in a hymn: "Come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God."<sup>4</sup> Every member of the Church of any age or circumstance will be touched and blessed by the inspired counsel of prophets of the Lord!

### **A photographer's experience**

The story is told of an event that happened in New York when President David O. McKay returned from a trip to Europe:

"Arrangements had been made for pictures to be taken, but the regular photographer was unable to go, so in desperation the United Press picked their crime photographer—a man accustomed to the toughest type of work in New York. He went to the airport, stayed there two hours, and returned later from [the] dark room with a tremendous sheaf of pictures. He was supposed to take only two. His boss immediately chided him, 'What in the world are you wasting time and all those photographic supplies for?'

"The photographer replied very curtly, saying he would gladly pay for the extra materials, and they could even dock him for the extra time he took. . . . Several hours later the vice-president called him to his office, wanting to learn what happened. The crime photographer said, 'When I was a little boy, my mother used to read to me out of the Old Testa-

ment, and all my life I have wondered what a prophet of God must really look like. Well, today I found one.'"<sup>5</sup>

### **Blessings of having living prophets**

Do we fully appreciate what a wondrous blessing it is to each one of us that we have found our prophet? The ways in which our lives have been enriched by listening to our prophet's voice are numerous. We have a clearer picture of who we are and what we mean to our Father in Heaven. We have received commandments and counsel to guide us, reminders to keep us on the straight and narrow, and encouraging words to spur us on when we become disheartened or discouraged. If we listen to the voices of the world, we will be misled. But if we listen to the voice of the Lord through His living prophet and follow his counsel, we will never go astray.

In a recent newspaper article President Hinckley was praised as "clearly a man for the season. . . . He's a hand shaker, a praiser, a man who knows what to say and how to say it, often with a sense of humor."<sup>6</sup> Brothers and sisters, those are just the things the general public sees. We as members of the Church see so much more. Through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit, we know that the true head of this Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, does communicate with us through President Hinckley. It was my blessing and privilege to feel that Spirit when I was called into President Hinckley's office to receive my call to the general Relief Society presidency one and a half years ago. Before I knew the purpose of my being there, I shook his hand and received a powerful personal witness that I was in the presence of a prophet of God. That witness made me feel exceedingly humble and reverent. If I was kind of quiet that day, President Hinckley, that is the reason.

We are so blessed to have a living prophet who makes connections that have never been made before. Joseph Smith made this prophecy in the dedication of the Kirtland Temple: "That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."<sup>7</sup> President Hinckley has been prepared for our day, for a media-savvy world.

Outside the windows of our lives are many voices announcing the death of honesty, the death of integrity, the death of goodness and righteousness, even announcing the death of the traditional family. How blessed we are as Latter-day Saints to know that God can speak to us through our living prophet today and give us guidance and instruction and encouragement so that we may continue, just as the Lord's true Church continues, steadfast and confident on the path that leads us back to Him.

### **The prophet will never lead us astray**

There aren't many guarantees in this life. There isn't a car made with a warranty that covers everything. No bank on earth can absolutely guarantee that your money is completely safe. Even the *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval has a disclaimer written right on it! Nothing man-made or man-controlled can ever be truly guaranteed! But here's the miracle. The Lord has given some marvelous guarantees without any disclaimers. And this is one of them: He will choose the prophet, and He will never let that man lead us astray. Imagine for a moment the impact of that promise. There is at least one place we can turn for pure, unpoluted guidance.

As sisters in Relief Society, it is our work, under the direction of the priesthood, to assist in bringing women and their families back to Heavenly Father to live with Him again, as we all did before we came to this earth. The voice of

a living prophet bearing God's message is clear and sure and safe and direct.

### **Lessons taught in the proclamation on the family**

God's message was never more clear and sure or safe and direct than when President Gordon B. Hinckley read, as part of his message at the general Relief Society meeting held September 23, 1995, the proclamation on the family.<sup>8</sup> Look at the lessons God taught a floundering world through this proclamation:

Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God.

We are created in His image.

Our gender was determined before we came to earth and is part of our eternal identity.

We lived with Him before we came to earth.

God commanded us to bear children but warned that the powers of procreation were to be employed only within the sacred bonds of marriage.

God tells us through His prophet that we have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other as husband and wife and to rear our children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs.

The family is ordained of God.

Parents have specific duties and responsibilities. Fathers preside, provide, and protect, and mothers nurture.

In addition, the proclamation contains this very important warning—that those who abuse spouse or offspring or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will stand accountable before God.

Further is this warning—that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets. Brothers and sisters, we are in the midst of that reality at this very moment. It is the duty of all of us to protect and strengthen the family.

### Heed the words of the living prophet

I invite you again to “come, listen to a prophet’s voice.” The Prophet Joseph Smith established Relief Society as a result of a revelation from God, so that “knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time henceforth.” Joseph Smith promised, “You will receive instructions through the order of the Priesthood which God has established, through the medium of those appointed to lead, guide and direct the affairs of the Church in this last dispensation.”<sup>9</sup>

In Relief Society we are taught ways to protect and strengthen the family.

President Hinckley has said: “The best lies ahead. . . . If you will stay on the straight and narrow, the best lies ahead. It is a wonderful time to be alive. It’s a great time to be a member of this Church when you can hold your head up without embarrassment and with some pride in this great latter-day work.”<sup>10</sup>

“Come, listen to a prophet’s voice,” that you may know the will of God, that you may have His light to direct your

path. It is my prayer that you may also have a personal witness, as I have, that our living prophet today, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has soul-saving instructions for you and yours—instructions that, if followed, will lead us all back to our heavenly home, safe and unspotted from the world. I say these things in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 157.
2. “The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Millennial Star*, 2 Sept. 1889, 548.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5.
4. *Hymns*, no. 21.
5. Arch L. Madsen, quoted in “Memories of a Prophet,” *Improvement Era*, Feb. 1970, 72.
6. Cala Byram, “President Hinckley, 87, Charms World As He Leads Church,” *Deseret News*, 23 May 1998, p. A1.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 109:73.
8. See *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
9. *History of the Church*, 4:607.
10. “Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley,” *Church News*, 2 Sept. 1995, 2.

## Elder Robert D. Hales

### The healing process of the soul

Since we assembled in general conference last April, as many of you know, I experienced my third heart attack, which necessitated bypass surgery. Because of skilled doctors; a caring and well-trained medical staff; my wife, Mary, who is my patient, loving, and constant caregiver; and the prayers offered by so many in my behalf, I have been blessed with renewed health and strength. Thank you for your concern and for your prayers.

My message today is how to aid the healing process of the soul. It is a message to lead you and me to the Great Healer, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is a plan to read the scriptures, pray,

ponder, repent if necessary, and be healed with the peace and joy of His Spirit. May I share my ponderings as I went through the healing process.

### Pondering is important for healing

While I was lying in my hospital bed and for several weeks at home, my physical activity was severely restricted by intense pain which disabled my weakened body, but I learned the joy of freeing my mind to ponder the meaning of life and the eternities. Since my calendar was wiped clean of meetings, tasks, and appointments, for a number of weeks I was able to turn my attention away from matters of administration to matters of

the eternities. The Lord has told us, "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds" (D&C 43:34). I discovered that if I dwelled only upon my pain, it inhibited the healing process. I found that pondering was a very important element in the healing process for both soul and body. Pain brings you to a humility that allows you to ponder. It is an experience I am grateful to have endured.

I pondered deeply the purpose of pain and studied in my mind what I could learn from my experience and began to comprehend pain a little better. I learned that the physical pain and the healing of the body after major surgery are remarkably similar to the spiritual pain and the healing of the soul in the process of repentance. "Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul" (D&C 101:37).

### **Exercise faith, study, and pray**

I have come to understand how useless it is to dwell on the *whys*, *what ifs*, and *if onlys* for which there likely will be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord's comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions *Why me?* *Why our family?* *Why now?* are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding.

In Proverbs we are told to "ponder the path of life" (Proverbs 5:6). As we ponder the path of life, we can set our path to righteousness and feel the Spirit direct us. "Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

If you and I are to feast upon the words of Christ, we must study the scrip-

tures and absorb His words through pondering them and making them a part of every thought and action.

Just as studying the words of Christ is an element of pondering, so too are diligent, faithful prayer and listening to the Spirit. In a revelation given through Joseph Smith, the Lord has told us:

"I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—

"Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:62–63).

### **Pondering brings gratitude and peace**

Pondering takes our thoughts from the trivial things of this world and brings us closer to the gentle, guiding hand of our Maker as we heed the "still small voice" of the Holy Ghost (see 1 Kings 19:12; 1 Nephi 17:45; D&C 85:6). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord spoke to David Whitmer: "Your mind has been on the things of the earth more than on the things of . . . your Maker, . . . and you have not given heed unto my Spirit" (D&C 30:2).

Pondering the things of the Lord—His word, His teachings, His commandments, His life, His love, the gifts He has given us, His Atonement for us—brings about a tremendous feeling of gratitude for our Savior and for the life and blessings He has given us.

Recent months have brought some tender experiences with families going through all the pain inherent in the peaceful passing of a family member. As the one passing away prepares to depart mortality, the family members experience a peace and willingness to let go of their loved one. The family members feel the pain of separation but are comforted by the peace that comes from

priesthood blessings, family prayers, and the knowledge of the Resurrection that assures them they will be reunited with their loved one in the not-too-distant future. Their faith and putting their trust in the Lord help them put the *whys* and *ifs* behind them and feel the comfort of the Spirit of the Lord.

### **Repentance brings spiritual healing**

Our Savior knows the heart of each of us. He knows the pains of our hearts. If we seek the truth, develop faith in Him, and, if necessary, sincerely repent, we will receive a spiritual change of heart which only comes from our Savior. Our hearts will become new again.

Repentance includes recognizing that we have done wrong and need to repent, confessing our sins to the proper priesthood authority, restoring whatever can be restored, and resolving to obey the Lord. Repentance brings about spiritual healing of the soul. In an address to his people, King Benjamin said:

"Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever" (Mosiah 2:38).

### **The Savior's pain**

As I endured physical pain, I thought also of the deeper pain and anguish of the soul. I thought of the pain experienced by our Savior, Jesus Christ—not only the acute and excruciating physical pain as He was lifted upon the cross, but also the chronic, agonizing, anguishing pain caused by the disobedience of mankind.

King Benjamin prophesied about the Savior:

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7).

The greater and more intense suffering of the Lord was not physical—not the trial or the mocking, not the beating or being spat upon. It was not even being betrayed by a beloved associate or rejected by those whom He loved. Nor was it the physical act of crucifixion. Although all of these things happened and each action was very painful, the Savior's greatest pain during the Atonement was endured to help the transgressor to be healed:

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

"But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:16–18).

### **Alma the Younger's pain and joy**

It is interesting to note that, other than in the book of Job and a few other places, there are very few scriptural references to physical or mortal pain. The pain most frequently spoken of in the scriptures is the pain and anguish of the Lord and His prophets for the disobedient souls.

Alma the Younger provides a vivid example in the account of his conversion. Alma had been rebellious, even so much that he and the sons of Mosiah went about "seeking to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:6). Imagine the pain and heartache of Alma's parents and, more importantly, of Heavenly Father and Jesus, who finally sent an angel to tell him,

"If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God" (Alma 36:9). It was painful enough that Alma should choose disobedience, but he was also causing others to rebel against the word of God.

Alma described his feelings when he saw and heard the angel. He said that as he remembered his rebellion and all of his sins and iniquities, he "was tormented with the pains of hell" (Alma 36:13). Alma's pain went beyond physical pain. He "was racked with eternal torment" (Alma 36:12) because of his disobedience and rebellion against God.

After recognizing the seriousness of his sins and then turning to God, he said: "There could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. . . . On the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy" (Alma 36:21).

His joy came because of his contrite repentance. From that time forth, Alma and all those who were with him, including the sons of Mosiah, went about trying "to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins" (Mosiah 27:35) and bringing souls unto Christ.

Only by repentance and asking for forgiveness of the Lord was Alma able to put his pain behind him and receive of the joy and light of the gospel. The Lord taught the Nephites that knowledge of the truth, diligent faith, and true repentance bring about a change of heart. Alma experienced a mighty change of heart.

### Understanding the pains of mortality

In this mortal life, each of us is going to experience pain in one form or another. Pain may come from an accident or from a painful medical condition. We may feel deep pain from the mourning that appropriately comes with the loss of a loved one or the loss of affection from

one we hold dear. Pain may come from feeling lonely or depressed. It often comes as a result of our disobedience to the commandments of God, but it also comes to those who are doing all they can to keep their lives in line with the example of the Savior.

The scriptures teach that "there is . . . opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Just as times of joy and happiness come to each of us, so also comes pain to every mortal. How can we understand those moments in our life when we experience physical or emotional pain?

Elder Spencer W. Kimball said: "We knew before we were born that we were coming to the earth for bodies and experience and that we would have joys and sorrows, ease and pain, comforts and hardships, health and sickness, successes and disappointments, and we knew also that . . . we would die. We accepted all these eventualities with a glad heart, eager to accept both the favorable and unfavorable. . . . We were willing to come and take life as it came" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 106).

Elder Orson F. Whitney wrote: "No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire" (quoted in *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 98).

### The Lord is the ultimate caregiver

When we are experiencing pain, the caregiver is a very important part of the recovery process. Attentive doctors,

nurses, therapists, a loving spouse, parents, children, and friends comfort us when we are ill and speed our recovery process. There are times when, no matter how independent we may be, we must entrust others with our care. We must surrender ourselves to them. Our caregivers are those who assist in the healing process.

The Lord is the ultimate caregiver. We must surrender ourselves to the Lord. In doing so, we give up whatever is causing our pain and turn everything over to Him. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). "And then may God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son" (Alma 33:23). Through faith and trust in the Lord and obedience to His counsel, we make ourselves eligible to be partakers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ so that one day we may return to live with Him.

As we put our faith and trust in the Lord, we must battle our pain day by day and sometimes hour by hour, even moment by moment; but in the end, we understand that marvelous counsel given to the Prophet Joseph Smith as he struggled with his pain of feeling forgotten and isolated in Liberty Jail:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes" (D&C 121:7-8).

### **Draw near to the Savior**

My dear brothers and sisters, when pain, tests, and trials come in life, draw near to the Savior. "Wait upon the Lord, . . . look for him" (Isaiah 8:17; 2 Nephi 18:17). "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall

run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Healing comes in the Lord's time and the Lord's way; be patient.

Our Savior waits for us to come to Him through our scripture study, pondering, and prayer to our Heavenly Father. Great blessings and lessons come from overcoming adversity. As we are strengthened and healed, we can then lift and strengthen others with our faith. May we be instruments in the Lord's hands in blessing the lives of those in pain.

I give you my testimony that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ and that He waits for us to come to Him to give us counsel and compassionate caring. May the Lord's blessings be upon each of us as we deal with the trials of life for us personally and for our loved ones, I so pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The chorus sang "Beautiful Savior" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

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### **President Hinckley**

Sister Virginia U. Jensen, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, has spoken to us, followed by Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve. The choir then sang those beautiful hymns "Beautiful Savior" and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

We are grateful to the Bonneville International LDS Radio Network and the owners and operators of the many other television and radio stations and cable systems for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to a large audience in many areas of the world.

We express our appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session, and following his remarks the chorus will sing "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Stephen A. West of the Seventy, and the conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### One leper returns to give thanks

In a land far away, and at a time long ago, Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem.

"He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

"And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."<sup>1</sup>

### "In every thing give thanks"

From the 30th Psalm, David pledges, "O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, proclaimed, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."<sup>3</sup> And to the Thessalonians, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God."<sup>4</sup>

My brothers and sisters, do we give thanks to God "for his unspeakable gift" and His rich blessings so abundantly bestowed upon us?

Do we pause and ponder Ammon's words? "Now my brethren, we see that God is mindful of every people, whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people . . . over all the earth. Now this is my joy, and my great thanksgiving; yea, and I will give thanks unto my God forever."<sup>5</sup>

Robert W. Woodruff, a prominent business leader of a former time, toured the United States giving a lecture which he entitled "A Capsule Course in Human Relations." In his message, he said that the two most important words in the English language are these: "Thank you."

*Gracias, danke, merci*—whatever language is spoken, "thank you" frequently expressed will cheer your spirit, broaden your friendships, and lift your lives to a higher pathway as you journey toward perfection. There is a simplicity—even a sincerity—when "thank you" is spoken.

### A boy expresses gratitude for a bicycle

The beauty and eloquence of an expression of gratitude is reflected in a newspaper story of some years ago:

The District of Columbia police auctioned off about 100 unclaimed bicycles Friday. "One dollar," said an 11-year-old boy as the bidding opened on the first bike. The bidding, however, went much higher. "One dollar," the boy repeated

hopefully each time another bike came up.

The auctioneer, who had been auctioning stolen or lost bikes for 43 years, noticed that the boy's hopes seemed to soar higher whenever a racer-type bicycle was put up.

Then there was just one racer left. The bidding went to eight dollars. "Sold to that boy over there for nine dollars!" said the auctioneer. He took eight dollars from his own pocket and asked the boy for his dollar. The youngster turned it over in pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters—took his bike, and started to leave. But he went only a few feet. Carefully parking his new possession, he went back, gratefully threw his arms around the auctioneer's neck, and cried.

When was the last time we felt gratitude as deeply as did this boy? The deeds others perform in our behalf might not be as poignant, but certainly there are kind acts that warrant our expressions of gratitude.

### **"Count your many blessings"**

The song frequently sung in the Sunday School of our youth placed the spirit of thanksgiving into the depths of our souls:

When upon life's billows you are  
tempest-tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking  
all is lost,  
Count your many blessings; name  
them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the  
Lord has done.<sup>6</sup>

Astronaut Gordon Cooper, while orbiting the earth over 30 years ago, offered this sweet and simple prayer of thanks: "Father, thank You, especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank You for the privilege of being able to be in this position; to be up in this wondrous place,

seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that You have created."<sup>7</sup>

We are thankful for blessings we cannot measure, for gifts we cannot appraise, "for books, music, art, and for the great inventions which make these blessings available; . . . for the laughter of little children; . . . for the . . . means for relieving human suffering . . . and increasing . . . the enjoyment of life; . . . for everything good and uplifting."<sup>8</sup>

The prophet Alma urged, "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day."<sup>9</sup>

I would like to mention three instances where I believe a sincere "thank you" could lift a heavy heart, inspire a good deed, and bring heaven's blessings closer to the challenges of our day.

### **Express thanks to parents**

First, may I ask that we express thanks to our parents for life, for caring, for sacrificing, for laboring to provide a knowledge of our Heavenly Father's plan for happiness.

From Sinai the words thunder to our conscience, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."<sup>10</sup>

I know of no sweeter expression toward a parent than that spoken by our Savior upon the cross:

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

"Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."<sup>11</sup>

### Express thanks to teachers

Next, have we thought on occasion of a certain teacher at school or at church who seemed to quicken our desire to learn, who instilled in us a commitment to live with honor?

The story is told of a group of men who were talking about people who had influenced their lives and for whom they were grateful. One man thought of a high school teacher who had introduced him to Tennyson. He decided to write and thank her. In time, written in a feeble scrawl, came the teacher's reply:

"My dear Willie:

"I can't tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my 80s, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and like the last leaf lingering behind. You will be interested to know that I taught school for 50 years, and yours is the first note of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered me as nothing has for years."

We owe an eternal debt of gratitude to all of those, past and present, who have given so much of themselves, that we might have so much ourselves.

### Express thanks to peers

Third, I mention an expression of "thank you" to one's peers. The teenage years can be difficult for the teens themselves as well as for their parents. These are trying times in the life of a boy or a girl. Each boy wants to make the football team; each girl wants to be the beauty queen. "Many are called, but few are chosen"<sup>12</sup> could have an application here.

### A miracle at Murray High School

Let me share with you a modern-day miracle which occurred a year or so ago at Murray High School near Salt Lake

City, where every person was a winner, and not a loser was to be found.

A newspaper article highlighted the event. It was entitled "Tears, Cheers and True Spirit: Students Elect 2 Disabled Girls to Murray Royalty." The article began:

"Ted and Ruth Eyre did what any parents would do.

"When their daughter, Shellie, became a finalist for Murray High School homecoming queen, they counseled her to be a good sport in case she didn't win. They explained only one girl among the 10 . . . would be selected queen. . . .

"As student body officers crowned the school's homecoming [royalty] in the school gym Thursday night, Shellie Eyre experienced, instead, inclusion. The 17-year-old senior, born with Down syndrome, was selected by fellow students as homecoming queen. . . .

" . . . As Ted Eyre escorted his daughter onto the gym floor as the candidates were introduced, the gym erupted into deafening cheers and applause. They were greeted with a standing ovation."

Similar standing ovations were extended to Shellie's attendants, one of whom, April Perschon, has physical and mental disabilities resulting from a brain hemorrhage suffered when she was just 10 years old.

When the ovations had ceased, the school vice principal Gloria Merrill said, "Tonight . . . the students voted on inner beauty." . . .

"Obviously moved, parents, school administrators and students wept openly." Said one student, "I'm so happy. I cried when they came out. I think Murray High is so awesome to do this."<sup>13</sup>

I extend a heartfelt "thank you" to one and all who made this night one ever to be remembered. To paraphrase the Scottish poet James Barrie, "God gave us memories, that we might have June roses in the December of our lives."<sup>14</sup>

### Compassionate response to girls' deaths

In August of this year, there occurred a tragedy in Salt Lake County. It was reported in the local and national press. Five beautiful little girls—so young, so vibrant, so loving—hiding away, as children often do in their games of hide-and-seek, entered the trunk of a parent's car. The trunk lid was pulled shut, they were unable to escape, and all perished from heat exhaustion.

The entire community was so kind, so thoughtful, so caring in the passing of Alisha, Ashley, McKell, Audrey, and Jaesha. Flowers, food, calls, visits, and prayers were shared.

On the Sunday after the devastating event occurred, long lines of automobiles filled with grieving occupants drove ever so slowly past the Smith home, the scene of the accident. Sister Monson and I wished to be among those who expressed condolences in this way. As we drove by, we felt we were on holy ground. We literally crept along at a snail's pace along the street. It was as though we could visualize a traffic sign reading, "Please drive slowly; children at play." Tears filled our eyes and compassion flowed from our hearts.

At the funeral, as well as the evening prior, thousands passed by the caskets and expressed support for the grieving parents and grandparents. In two of the three families, the deceased children were all the children they had.

Frequently death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly appears in the midst of life's feast, putting out its lights and gaiety. It visits the aged as they walk on faltering feet. Its summons is heard by those who have scarcely reached midway in life's journey, and often it hushes the laughter of little children.

### Counsel at the funeral

At the funeral services for the five little angels, I counseled: "There is one

phrase which should be erased from your thinking and from the words you speak aloud. It is the phrase 'If only.' It is counterproductive and is not conducive to the spirit of healing and of peace. Rather, recall the words of Proverbs: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.'<sup>15</sup>"

Before the closing of the caskets, I noted that each child held a favorite toy, a soft gift to cuddle. I reflected on the words of the poet Eugene Field:

The little toy dog is covered with  
dust,  
But sturdy and staunch he stands;  
And the little toy soldier is red with  
rust,  
And his musket moulds in his hands.  
Time was when the little toy dog was  
new,  
And the soldier was passing fair,  
And that was the time when our  
Little Boy Blue  
Kissed them and put them there.

"Now, don't you go till I come," he  
said,  
"And don't you make any noise!"  
So toddling off to his trundle-bed  
He dreamt of the pretty toys.  
And as he was dreaming, an angel  
song  
Awakened our Little Boy Blue,—  
Oh, the years are many, the years  
are long,  
But the little toy friends are true!

Ay, faithful to Little Boy Blue they  
stand,  
Each in the same old place,  
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,  
The smile of a little face.  
And they wonder, as waiting these  
long years through,  
In the dust of that little chair,  
What has become of our Little Boy  
Blue  
Since he kissed them and put them  
there.<sup>16</sup>

### One source of true peace

The little toy dog and the soldier fair may wonder, but God in His infinite mercy has not left grieving loved ones to wonder. He has provided truth. He will inspire an upward reach, and His outstretched arms will embrace you. Jesus promises to one and all who grieve, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."<sup>17</sup>

There is only one source of true peace. I am certain that the Lord, who notes the fall of a sparrow, looks with compassion upon those who have been called upon to part—even temporarily—from their precious children. The gifts of healing and of peace are desperately needed, and Jesus, through His Atonement, has provided them for one and all.

### Words of comfort about children who die

The Prophet Joseph Smith spoke inspired words of revelation and comfort: "All children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven."<sup>18</sup>

"The mother [and father] who laid down [their] little child[ren], being deprived of the privilege, the joy, and the satisfaction of bringing [them] up to manhood or womanhood in this world, would, after the resurrection, have all the joy, satisfaction and pleasure, and even more than it would have been possible to have had in mortality, in seeing [their] child[ren] grow to the full measure of the stature of [their] spirit[s]."<sup>19</sup> This is as the balm of Gilead to those who grieve, to those who have loved and lost precious children.

### "Joy cometh in the morning"

The Psalmist provided this assurance: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."<sup>20</sup>

Said the Lord:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>21</sup>

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also."<sup>22</sup>

I express my profound thanks to a loving Heavenly Father, who gives to you, to me, and to all who sincerely seek, the knowledge that death is not the end, that His Son—even our Savior, Jesus Christ—died that we might live. Temples of the Lord dot the lands of many countries. Sacred covenants are made. Celestial glory awaits the obedient. Families can be together—forever.

The Master invites one and all:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."<sup>23</sup>

That all may do so is my humble prayer of thanks, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Luke 17:11–19.
2. Psalm 30:12.
3. 2 Corinthians 9:15.
4. 1 Thessalonians 5:18.
5. Alma 26:37.
6. "Count Your Blessings," *Hymns*, no. 241.
7. *Congressional Record*, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, 109, pt. 7:9156.
8. "Three Centuries of Thanksgiving," *Etude Music Magazine*, Nov. 1945, 614.
9. Alma 37:37.
10. Exodus 20:12.
11. John 19:26–27.
12. Matthew 22:14.
13. Marjorie Cortez, *Deseret News*, 26 Sept. 1997, pp. A1, A7.

14. In Laurence J. Peter, comp., *Peter's Quotations: Ideas for Our Time* (1977), 335.
15. Proverbs 3:5-6.
16. "Little Boy Blue," in Jack M. Lyon and others, eds., *Best-Loved Poems of the LDS People* (1996), 50.
17. John 14:18.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 137:10.
19. Quoted in Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 453.

20. Psalm 30:5.
21. John 14:27.
22. John 14:2-3.
23. Matthew 11:28-29.

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The chorus sang "Hark, All Ye Nations!"

Elder Stephen A. West offered the benediction.

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## SATURDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The second session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, October 3, 1998, at 2:00 P.M. President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted this session.

The music was provided by a Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area, under the direction of Sister Vickie Belnap, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

President Faust made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President James E. Faust

My beloved brothers and sisters, we welcome you to this, the second general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked that I, Brother Faust, conduct this session.

We extend our greetings to all who are in attendance or are participating by means of television, cable, or radio, and to the many who are watching in stake centers in various parts of the world where the conference is being carried by satellite transmission.

We are especially grateful this afternoon for the presence of Elder Andrew W. Peterson at this session.

The music for this session will be by a Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area, under the direction of Sister Vickie Belnap, with Sister Linda Margetts at the organ.

The choir will now sing "I Stand All Amazed." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Kenneth Johnson of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "I Stand All Amazed."

Elder Kenneth Johnson offered the invocation.

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### President Faust

The choir will now sing "I'll Serve the Lord While I Am Young." President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will then present the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

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The choir sang "I'll Serve the Lord While I Am Young."

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## Sustaining of Church Authorities and Officers

### President Thomas S. Monson

My brothers and sisters, President Hinckley has requested that I now present to you the General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies of the Church for your sustaining vote.

It is proposed that we sustain Gordon Bitner Hinckley as prophet, seer, and revelator and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Thomas Spencer Monson as First Counselor in the First Presidency; and James Esdras Faust as Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Those in favor may manifest it. Those opposed, if any, may manifest.

It is proposed that we sustain Thomas Spencer Monson as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Boyd Kenneth Packer as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and the following as members of that quorum: Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, David B. Haight, Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, Dallin H. Oaks, M. Russell Ballard, Joseph B. Wirthlin, Richard G. Scott, Robert D. Hales, Jeffrey R. Holland, and Henry B. Eyring. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators. All in favor may manifest it. Contrary, if there be any, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we extend an official vote of appreciation to Elders Jack H. Goaslind, W. Eugene Hansen, James M. Paramore, and Ronald E. Poelman and designate them as emeritus members of the First Quorum of the Seventy. All who wish to join with us in doing so, please manifest. Thank you.

It is proposed that we release with a vote of thanks Elders Monte J. Brough,

W. Eugene Hansen, and Jack H. Goaslind as Presidents of the Quorums of the Seventy; Elders Jack H. Goaslind, Robert K. Dellenbach, and F. Melvin Hammond as the Young Men general presidency; and Elder Glenn L. Pace as first counselor and Elder Neil L. Andersen as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency. Those who wish to join in an expression of appreciation to all for their services, please make it known.

It is proposed that we sustain Elders D. Todd Christofferson, Marlin K. Jensen, and David E. Sorensen as members of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy. All in favor, please manifest. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain Elder Neil L. Andersen as first counselor and Elder John H. Groberg as second counselor in the Sunday School general presidency, and Elders Robert K. Dellenbach, F. Melvin Hammond, and John M. Madson as the Young Men general presidency. All in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities, Area Authority Seventies, and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may similarly manifest it.

It appears, President Hinckley, that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative. Thank you, brothers and sisters, for your faith and your prayers.

### President Faust

We will now hear from President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## President Boyd K. Packer

### Parents in Zion

In 1831 the Lord gave a revelation to parents in Zion.<sup>1</sup> It is about parents that I wish to speak.

I have served in the Quorum of the Twelve for 28 years, and 9 years as an Assistant to the Twelve. Put together, that makes 37 years—exactly half my life.

But I have another calling which I have held even longer. I am a parent—a father and a grandfather. It took years to earn the *grandfather* title—another 20 years the title of *great-grandfather*. These titles—*father, grandfather, mother, grandmother*—carry responsibility and an authority which comes in part from experience. Experience is a compelling teacher.

### Balancing family and Church

My calling in the priesthood defines my position in the Church; the title *grandfather*, my position in the family. I want to talk about both of them together.

Parenthood stands among the most important activities to which Latter-day Saints may devote themselves. Many members face conflicts as they struggle to balance their responsibility as parents together with faithful activity in the Church.

There are things vital to the well-being of a family which can be found only by going to church. There is the priesthood, which empowers a man to lead and bless his wife and children, and covenants which bind them together forever.

The Church was commanded to “meet together often”<sup>2</sup> and told, “When ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other.”<sup>3</sup> Alma the Elder and Alma the Younger gave the same instruction to their people.<sup>4</sup>

We are commanded to “turn the heart[s] of the fathers to the children, and the heart[s] of the children to their fathers.”<sup>5</sup>

The Lord addressed Joseph Smith Jr. by name and said, “You have not kept the commandments, and must needs stand rebuked.”<sup>6</sup> He had failed to teach his children. That is the only time the word *rebuke* is used in correcting him.

His counselor Frederick G. Williams was under the same condemnation: “You have not taught your children light and truth.”<sup>7</sup> Sidney Rigdon was told the same thing, as was Bishop Newel K. Whitney,<sup>8</sup> and the Lord added, “What I say unto one I say unto all.”<sup>9</sup>

### Church’s inspired guidance for families

We have watched the standards of morality sink ever lower until now they are in a free-fall. At the same time we have seen an outpouring of inspired guidance for parents and for families.

The whole of the curriculum and all of the activities of the Church have been restructured and correlated with the home:

- Ward teaching became home teaching.
- Family home evening was reestablished.
- Genealogy was renamed family history and set to collect records of all the families.
- And then the historic proclamation on the family was issued by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

• The family became, and remains, a prevailing theme in meetings, conferences, and councils.

• All as a prelude to an unprecedented era of building temples wherein the authority to seal families together forever is exercised.

Can you see the spirit of inspiration resting upon the servants of the Lord and upon parents? Can we understand the challenge and the assault now leveled at the family?

### **Use care in scheduling activities**

In providing out-of-home activities for the family, we must use care; otherwise, we could be like a father determined to provide everything for his family. He devotes every energy to that end and succeeds; only then does he discover that what they needed most—to be together as a family—has been neglected. And he reaps sorrow in place of contentment.

How easy it is, in our desire to provide schedules of programs and activities, to overlook the responsibilities of the parent and the essential need for families to have time together.

We must be careful lest programs and activities of the Church become too heavy for some families to carry. The principles of the gospel, where understood and applied, strengthen and protect both individuals and families. Devotion to the family and devotion to the Church are not different and separate things.

### **Keep family and Church in perspective**

I recently saw a woman respond when it was said of another, "Since she had the new baby, she isn't doing anything in the Church." You could almost see a baby in her arms as she protested with emotion: "She *is* doing something in the Church. She gave that baby life. She nurtures and teaches it. She is doing the most important thing that she can do in the Church."

How would you respond to this question: "Because of their handicapped child, she is confined to the home and he works two jobs to meet the extra

expenses. They seldom attend—can we count them as active in the Church?"

And have you ever heard a woman say, "My husband is a very good father, but he's never been a bishop or a stake president or done anything important in the Church." In response to that, a father vigorously said, "What is more important in the Church than being a good father?"

Faithful attendance at church, together with careful attention to the needs of the family, is a near-perfect combination. In church we are taught the great plan of happiness.<sup>10</sup> At home we apply what we have learned. Every call, every service in the Church brings experience and valuable insights which carry over into family life.

Would our perspective be more clear if we could, for a moment, look upon parenthood as a calling in the Church? Actually, it is so much more than that; but if we could look at it that way for a moment, we could reach a better balance in the way we schedule families.

### **Do not burden families unnecessarily**

I do not want anyone to use what I say to excuse them in turning down an inspired call from the Lord. I *do* want to encourage leaders to carefully consider the home lest they issue calls or schedule activities which place an unnecessary burden on parents and families.

Recently I read a letter from a young couple whose callings in the Church frequently require them to hire a sitter for their small children in order for them to attend their meetings. It has become very difficult for both of them to be home with their children at the same time. Can you see something out of balance there?

Every time you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Consider the mother who, in addition to her own Church calling and that

of her husband, must get her children ready and run from one activity to another. Some mothers become discouraged—even depressed. I receive letters using the word *guilt* because they cannot do it all.

Attending church is, or should be, a respite from the pressures of everyday life. It should bring peace and contentment. If it brings pressure and discouragement, then something is out of balance.

And the Church is not the only responsibility parents have. Other agencies have a very legitimate reason to call upon the resources of the family—schools, employers, community—all need to be balanced in.

Recently a mother told me her family had moved from a rural, scattered ward where, of necessity, activities were consolidated into one weekday night. It was wonderful. They had time for their family. I can see them sitting around the table together.

They moved west into a larger ward where members were closer to the chapel. She said, "Now our family is scheduled Tuesday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night. It is very hard on our family."

Remember, when you schedule a youngster, you schedule a family—particularly the mother.

Most families try very hard; but some, when burdened with problems of health and finance, simply become exhausted trying to keep up, and eventually they withdraw into inactivity. They do not see that they are moving from the one best source of light and truth, of help with their family, into the shadows where danger and heartbreak await.

I must touch upon what must surely be the most difficult problem to solve. Some youngsters receive very little teaching and support at home. There is no question but that we must provide for them. But if we provide a constant sched-

ule of out-of-home activities sufficient to compensate for the loss in those homes, it may make it difficult for attentive parents to have time to be with and teach their own children. Only prayer and inspiration can lead us to find this difficult balance.

### **Importance of learning at home**

We often hear, "We must provide frequent and exciting activities lest our youth will go to less wholesome places." Some of them will. But I have the conviction that if we teach parents to be responsible and allow them sufficient time, over the long course their children will be at home.

There, at home, they can learn what cannot be effectively taught in either Church or school. At home they can learn to work and to take responsibility. They learn what to do when they have children of their own.

For example, in the Church children are taught the principle of tithing, but it is at home that the principle is applied. At home even young children can be shown how to figure a tithe and how it is paid.

One time President and Sister Harold B. Lee were in our home. Sister Lee put a handful of pennies on a table before our young son. She had him slide the shiny ones to one side and said, "These are your tithing; these belong to the Lord. The others are yours to keep." He thoughtfully looked from one pile to the other and then said, "Don't you have any more dirty ones?" That was when the real teaching moment began!

### **Use the ward council to establish balance**

The ward council is the perfect place to establish the balance between home and Church. Here the brethren of the priesthood, themselves fathers, and sisters of the auxiliaries, themselves mothers, can, with inspired insight, coordinate

the work of the organizations, each of which serves different members of the family.

Members of the council can compare what each organization is providing for each member and how much time and money are required. They can unite rather than divide families and provide watch care over single parents, the childless, the unmarried, the elderly, the handicapped—and provide much more than just activities for the children and young people.

The ward council has resources often overlooked. For instance, grandparents, while not filling callings, can help young families who are finding their way along the same path they once walked.

The Lord warned parents, “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, . . . that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”<sup>11</sup>

The ward council is ideal for our present need. Here the home and the family can be anchored in place, and the Church can support rather than supplant the parents. Fathers and mothers will understand both their obligation to teach their children and the blessings provided by the Church.

### Most important things learned at home

As the world grows ever more threatening, the powers of heaven draw ever closer to families and parents.

I have studied much in the scriptures and have taught from them. I have read much from what the prophets and apostles have spoken. They have had a profound influence upon me as a man and as a father.

But most of what I know about how our Father in Heaven really feels about us, His children, I have learned from the way I feel about my wife and my children and their children. This I have learned at home. I have learned it from my parents and from my wife’s parents, from my beloved wife and from my children, and I can therefore testify of a loving Heavenly Father and of a redeeming Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 20:75.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 43:8.
4. See Mosiah 18:25; Alma 6:6.
5. Malachi 4:6; see also 3 Nephi 25:5–6; Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:47.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:41–42.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:44, 50.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 93:49.
10. See Alma 12:32.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 68:25.

## Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

### Significant dates and events in our lives

We often mark significant dates on our calendars, such as holidays and birthdays. Dates that come around every year help us measure progress in our lives. One annual event, New Year’s Day, is a time of reflection and resolution.

Our baptism date, which commemorates our spiritual rebirth, is an annual occasion worthy of special note. We pause to recognize the date of our temple sealing as a special anniversary because that ordinance binds us together forever with our most cherished loved ones. Worthiness interviews, especially

annual temple recommend interviews, give us another opportunity to review our progress in fulfilling the glorious stewardship our Father in Heaven has given each of us. Certainly we must watch over and care for our own souls. On these occasions we renew covenants, affirm commitments, and establish eternal goals.

A few significant events occur only once in a lifetime. For example, in less than 15 months—454 days, to be precise—we will experience a New Year's Day when all four numerals in the calendar year will change at the same time. Public opinion polls indicate that this singular calendar change "is looming increasingly large in the public consciousness." Surveys show that people are anticipating the moment with "a very positive outlook." One forecaster said that the millennial calendar change "will be a profound milestone in people's lives, an opportunity to stop and start anew."<sup>1</sup>

### **The Savior's birth and mortal ministry**

The birth of the Savior into mortality is an event of immeasurable significance that occurred almost 2,000 years ago. In much of the world, calendar years are numbered forward and backward from the time of His birth. He taught the gospel of repentance and organized His Church, atoned for the sins of all mankind, and was crucified. He was resurrected, opening the way for all to overcome death and have our sins forgiven if we repent. His teachings established standards of human behavior that will endure eternally.

### **The Savior's Second Coming**

Perhaps in an effort to escape the challenges of our times, a few voices proclaim that the Second Coming of the Savior is imminent. Perhaps, but the Lord could not have been more plain

when He said of His triumphal return to the earth, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."<sup>2</sup> He taught this truth on the Mount of Olives and repeated it in modern revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith with the words, "The hour and the day no man knoweth."<sup>3</sup>

Yes, the time will come when "Christ will reign personally upon the earth."<sup>4</sup> Certainly we are closer to that time now than in 1831 when the Lord admonished the elders of the Church to "labor . . . in my vineyard for the last time—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth. . . . For the great Millennium, of which I have spoken by the mouth of my servants, shall come."<sup>5</sup>

We do not know the precise time of the Second Coming of the Savior, but we do know that we are living in the latter days and are closer to the Second Coming than when the Savior lived His mortal life in the meridian of time. We should resolve to begin a new era of personal obedience to prepare for His return. Mortality is fleeting. We all have much to accomplish in preparation to meet Him.

As Latter-day Saints, "we believe all things, we hope all things. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things."<sup>6</sup> What do we believe that will motivate us to move forward? What do we hope for? What are the virtuous, lovely, or praiseworthy things we should seek after? I believe we should strive to develop within ourselves the traits of the character of the Savior.

### **Faith, hope, and charity**

The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."<sup>7</sup> These divine attributes should become fixed in our hearts and minds to guide us in all of our ac-

tions. We read in Moroni: "Cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. . . . Whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him."<sup>8</sup> Charity can be the outward expression of faith and hope. If sought and obtained, these three foundation elements of celestial character will abide with us in this life and beyond the veil into the next life. Remember that the "same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that [you] go out of this life . . . will have power to possess your body in [the] eternal world."<sup>9</sup> We should not wait a single day to intensify our personal efforts to strengthen these virtuous, lovely, and praiseworthy attributes.

When we keep the Lord's commandments, faith, hope, and charity abide with us. These virtues "distil upon [our] soul as the dews from heaven,"<sup>10</sup> and we prepare ourselves to stand with confidence before our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, "without blemish and without spot."<sup>11</sup>

As I read and ponder the scriptures, I see that developing faith, hope, and charity within ourselves is a step-by-step process. Faith begets hope, and together they foster charity. We read in Moroni, "Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity."<sup>12</sup> These three virtues may be sequential initially, but once obtained, they become interdependent. Each one is incomplete without the others. They support and reinforce each other. Moroni explained, "And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope."<sup>13</sup>

These are the virtuous, lovely, praiseworthy characteristics we seek. We all are familiar with Paul's teaching that "charity never faileth."<sup>14</sup> Certainly we need unfailing spiritual strength in our lives. Moroni recorded the revelation

"that faith, hope and charity bringeth [us] unto [the Lord]—the fountain of all righteousness."<sup>15</sup>

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the restored Church of the Lord on the earth today, guides us to the Savior and helps us develop, nurture, and strengthen these divine attributes. In fact, He revealed the qualifications required to labor in His service in these words: "No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity."<sup>16</sup>

Mormon taught that "charity is the pure love of Christ" and exhorted us to "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ."<sup>17</sup> Note that charity is given only to those who seek it, only to those who earnestly pray for it, only to those who are disciples of Christ. Before we can be filled with this pure love, we must start at the beginning with the first principle of the gospel. We must have "first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>18</sup>

## Faith

"Now *faith* is the substance of things *hoped* for, the evidence of things not seen."<sup>19</sup> "Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if [we] have faith [we] hope for things which are not seen, which are true."<sup>20</sup> Latter-day Saints can rejoice in the strength of our faith because we have the fulness of the gospel. If we study, ponder, and pray, our faith in the unseen but true things of God will grow. Even if we start with only "a particle of faith, . . . even if [we] can no more than desire to believe,"<sup>21</sup> with nurturing attention a tiny seed of faith can grow into a vibrant, strong, fruitful tree of testimony.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ motivates us to repent. Through repentance, made possible by the Lord's Atonement, we can feel the calming peace of forgive-

ness for our sins, weaknesses, and mistakes. With faith in a spiritual rebirth, we are baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We strive to keep the commandments of God with faith that obedience will help us become like Him. By virtue of the Resurrection of our Savior, we have faith that death is not the end of life. We have faith that we once again will know the pleasant company and warm embrace of loved ones who have departed from mortality.

### Hope

Mormon asked the Saints of his day, "And what is it that ye shall hope for?" He gave them this answer: "Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise."<sup>22</sup> In Ether we learn that "whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, [and] maketh an anchor to the souls of men."<sup>23</sup>

Even when the winds of adversity blow, our Father keeps us anchored to our hope. The Lord has promised, "I will not leave you comfortless,"<sup>24</sup> and He will "consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain."<sup>25</sup> Even when our trials seem overwhelming, we can draw strength and hope from the sure promise of the Lord: "Be not afraid nor dismayed . . . ; for the battle is not yours, but God's."<sup>26</sup>

### Charity

Once faith grows into a firm, abiding testimony, giving us hope in our Heavenly Father's plan of happiness; once we see through the eye of faith that we are children of a loving Father, who has given us the gift of His Son to redeem us, we experience a mighty change in our

hearts.<sup>27</sup> We feel "to sing the song of redeeming love,"<sup>28</sup> and our hearts overflow with charity. Knowing that the love of God "is the most desirable [of] all things . . . and the most joyous to the soul,"<sup>29</sup> we want to share our joy with others. We want to serve them and bless them.

### Family

"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" states clearly the sacredness of the family and that a "husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children."<sup>30</sup> Children should be taught at an early age of the sacredness of temples, and that their ultimate goal should be to go to the temple to enjoy the blessings that our Heavenly Father has in store for them. Even the tapestry of this sacred goal is given to children that will, in due time, realize this is the greatest blessing that could come to them in this life.

### Temples

The ideals of faith, hope, and charity are most evident in the holy temples. There we learn the purpose of life, strengthen our commitment as disciples of Christ by entering into sacred covenants with Him, and seal our families together for eternity across generations. Receiving our own endowment in a temple and returning frequently to perform sacred ordinances for our kindred dead increases our faith, strengthens our hope, and deepens our charity. We receive our own endowment with faith and hope that we will understand the Lord's plan for His children, will recognize the divine potential within each of us as children of our Heavenly Father, and will be faithful to the end in keeping the covenants we make.

Performing temple ordinances for the dead is a manifestation of charity, offering essential blessings to those who

have preceded us, blessings that were not available to them during their mortal lives. We have the privilege of doing for them what they are unable to do for themselves.

When President Gordon B. Hinckley announced an unprecedented number of new temples last April, he declared that "temple ordinances become the crowning blessings the Church has to offer."<sup>31</sup> He is extending these crowning blessings to more Latter-day Saints than ever before. In the house of the Lord, faithful Church members can be endowed "with power from on high,"<sup>32</sup> power that will enable us to resist temptation, honor covenants, obey the Lord's commandments, and bear fervent, fearless testimony of the gospel to family, friends, and neighbors.

This past July we were privileged to participate with President Hinckley in the dedication of the Monticello Utah Temple, the first of the new generation of temples that the Lord has directed our prophet to have built closer to the Saints. What a great spiritual experience that was to be among faithful Saints who never expected that a temple would be built in their town. These are people of great faith; some of them are descendants of the Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers, who struggled, labored, and sacrificed through many years of toil to establish Zion on the high plateaus of southeastern Utah.<sup>33</sup>

Brothers and sisters, great things are happening in the Church! We are moving forward as never before. President Hinckley's leadership is challenging us to rise to the occasion. We will attain new levels of spirituality and place our lives in closer harmony with Jesus the Christ based on how fully faith, hope, and charity become integral components of our lives. We surely will have challenges and trials, but with more assurance than ever we will have greater peace and joy, for He promised us His peace.<sup>34</sup>

## Testimony

I testify to you as a special witness that Jesus is the Christ and that through His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, the Savior presides over His Church. May we cultivate, in preparation of His returning to this earth, His divine attributes is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. *Outlook*, NFO Research, Inc., summer 1998.
2. Matthew 24:36.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 49:7.
4. Articles of Faith 1:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 43:28, 30.
6. Articles of Faith 1:13.
7. 1 Corinthians 13:13.
8. Moroni 7:46-47.
9. Alma 34:34.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.
11. 1 Peter 1:19.
12. Moroni 10:20.
13. Moroni 10:21.
14. 1 Corinthians 13:8.
15. Ether 12:28.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 12:8.
17. Moroni 7:47-48.
18. Articles of Faith 1:4.
19. Hebrews 11:1; italics added.
20. Alma 32:21.
21. Alma 32:27; see also verses 28-43.
22. Moroni 7:41.
23. Ether 12:4.
24. John 14:18.
25. 2 Nephi 2:2.
26. 2 Chronicles 20:15.
27. See Alma 5:14.
28. Alma 5:26.
29. 1 Nephi 11:22-23.
30. *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
31. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 116; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 88.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 95:8.
33. See *Church News*, 1 Aug. 1998, 4.
34. See John 14:27.

### President Faust

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Our next speaker will be Elder E. Ray Bateman, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Now Let Us Rejoice."

## Elder E. Ray Bateman

### Pearls from the sand

Abraham found great favor from the Lord because of his obedience to whatsoever the Lord commanded him. Abraham took Isaac, his son, at the Lord's direction, to offer him up unto the Lord as a sacrifice. Because of this great love and obedience to the commandments, the Lord stayed Abraham's hand from offering Isaac and blessed Abraham and said, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Genesis 22:17). The blessing of Abraham is still upon his seed, and the covenant that was made is theirs to have as Abraham's seed come unto Christ. The Apostle Paul taught, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). It is our responsibility as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to gather Abraham's seed and bring them unto Christ.

They should be easy to find, for they are as numerous as the sands of the seashore. That really means they are all around us. Are we looking? Are we asking? Are our good friends or the people we work with who are nonmembers the seed of Abraham? Are we opening our mouths to see if we can find out? The Savior counseled, "Ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts" (D&C 29:7). In keeping with this counsel of the Savior, do we talk about the Church? Are we listening

to the prompting of the Spirit? The seed of Abraham hear His voice and will not harden their hearts. Do we invite them to come unto Christ? Are we allowing them to hear His voice?

It is written:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matthew 13:45-46).

You and I know the gospel of Jesus Christ is the pearl of great price. Each of those little grains of sand are Abraham's children. They need to be cultured to become pearls. They need the right friend, a responsibility to help them grow in service, and nourishment with charity to retain them to truly become pearls of great worth in our Father's kingdom.

### Be friendly and share the gospel

President Hinckley said: "Be friendly. You have to make a friend before you make a convert. Conversion follows friendship. The opportunity to teach follows friendship" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 375). Do we invite our friends to come to church with us? Do we go with the missionaries as they teach the discussions to our friends? Do we invite them to be taught in our homes? Do we visit them between the discussions? Are we doing what the Savior would have us do? Do we even open our mouths?

The Lord said:

"With some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but

they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them.

"And it shall come to pass, if they are not more faithful unto me, it shall be taken away, even that which they have" (D&C 60:2-3).

### **A conversion story**

I would like to tell you about the St. Charles Ward and how they friend-shipped and nourished Brother Jim Hueston. Jim belonged to another church, but he found it was hard to obtain transportation to attend meetings. No one picked him up. I had the good fortune to meet Jim. A Book of Mormon was given; a commitment was made to read and pray. Our members provided transportation for Jim to come to the St. Charles Ward. The missionaries taught the discussions, and Jim read and prayed.

At Jim's baptism, he asked me, his bishop, "What do you want me to do?" I took Jim to my office and talked about the Church, teaching him about the priesthood and what the Lord would have him do as a member of the Church. He received the Aaronic Priesthood and was assigned to serve as a home teacher. The elders quorum president assigned a strong, faithful, diligent home teaching companion. Brother Hueston, as the newest member of the St. Charles Ward, made sure that his home teaching was completed. Not only for that first month but for the past 20 years he has completed his home teaching every month. He has served in many different callings, and serving as a stake missionary was one of his favorites.

Ward members wrapped their arms around Brother Hueston and made sure that he was a fellow citizen "with the saints, and of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Jim learned to drive and bought himself a car so that he could do his home teaching and any other call-

ings he received. We are not sure if we kept him or he kept us "in the right way" (Moroni 6:4). We know that what President Hinckley is asking us to do now was accomplished then with Brother Hueston.

I talked with Brother Hueston this summer. He told me how he and his home teaching companion were helping a less-active member come back into activity. He said, "She is looking forward to taking the temple preparation class and going to the temple."

### **Renew commitment to missionary work**

Brothers and sisters, let us renew our commitment to seek the Spirit to help us find those who are Abraham's seed. Then let us open our mouths, friendship them, invite them to come unto Christ, and be there to support, nourish, and retain them. And wherever possible, let us be there when they go to the temple. Our Father in Heaven wants all of Abraham's seed to return to Him. Let us join in this great balanced effort for conversion, retention, and activation, to assist the Father and Son to turn those grains of sand into pearls in our Father's kingdom.

The Savior said:

"I give unto you a commandment, that every . . . elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

"And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness" (D&C 38:40-41).

I know that He lives and guides His Church through His prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang "Now Let Us Rejoice."

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### President Faust

It will now be our pleasure to hear from Elder Athos M. Amorím of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder

Val R. Christensen of the Seventy. Elders Amorím and Christensen were sustained as members of the Seventy at April conference.

## Elder Athos M. Amorím

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends, I am sure you can realize what my feelings are as for the first time I come to this pulpit, where sacred words have been spoken by the servants of the Lord.

My heart is filled with gratitude to my Heavenly Father for the many blessings in my life; to the Lord Jesus Christ for His love and Atonement for me; to my dear wife, children, and grandchildren for the love and support I have always received from them.

### Obedience and service

On an outside wall of the Brazilian Army Academy, cadets can read the words "You will command. So learn to obey!" Early in life I learned that obedience is a great virtue, essential to our progress. I am not talking about blind obedience but the obedience that allows us to reach a higher and more spiritual level in life, using our agency to do the will of the Lord. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:21). President Hinckley restated in 1982 that "all blessings are [predicated] upon . . . obedience to [the] law" (*What of the Mormons?* [pamphlet, 1982], 6). The greatest example of obedience was given by the Lord Jesus Christ when He said, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Something else I learned in the army is that soldiers in my country do not use the verb *to work* when they talk about their assignments. Rather, they use the

verb *to serve*, helping them to always remember the commitment to serve our people and our country. In Church service this definition is enlarged to include a meaning closer to the teachings of the Lord—that is, to serve His children wherever they may live.

Today almost 60,000 missionaries serve in many countries, most of them in environments very different from their own. In the São Paulo Temple, as well as in other temples, many brothers and sisters are willing to make any sacrifice to serve in the house of the Lord.

### An example of service

Many times the most beautiful examples of obedience and service are given by ordinary people who live close to us. Sister Ana Rita de Jesus, an elderly widow, lived in Anápolis, Brazil. She could not read or write. The missionaries would go to her home every week to read the scriptures to her. She was loving and kind. Every Sunday she would ask the missionaries to help her fill out a tithing slip. Sometimes her tithing and offerings were not more than a few cents, but she knew the law and wanted to obey it. After paying her tithing, she would walk into the room where the sacrament meeting was held in the rented house used as a chapel and would place a flower on the pulpit. In doing so, she served her brothers and sisters, bringing beauty to the place where we worshiped the Lord.

That sister, in a very simple way, taught us obedience and service through

her faith. She knew that obeying the commandments is the best preparation to serve. President Monson advised us in the last April general conference to "obey the commandments" and "serve with love" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 63; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 47). Sister Ana Rita did so throughout her life.

### **Desire to obey and serve God**

When I was called to serve as a General Authority, I had an interview with President Faust. He noticed that I was concerned because I felt inadequate for such a call. In his tender way, President Faust told me, "Athos, be yourself. Be yourself." That night I lay awake in bed, thinking of my new responsibilities and

of President Faust's words. And I prayed. I asked myself, *Who am I?* And the answer came as clear and bright as the dawn of that brand-new day. I am, like each one of you, a child of God who wants to obey the Lord and serve wherever He sends me and thus be a better child of our Heavenly Father and a faithful member of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

I know that Jesus Christ lives and that He is the head of this Church. I know He is our Savior and Redeemer. I know that Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration and that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet called by the Lord to preside over the Church today. Of this I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## **Elder Val R. Christensen**

When a member of the Church is called to challenging responsibilities, it is only natural to reflect upon the events and people who brought him to this point in his life. The call to serve in the Seventy offers a chance to express appreciation to friends, family—especially my wife, Ruth Ann—and to the missionaries in the Arizona Phoenix Mission. I love all of you. I look forward also to serving the wonderful people of the Philippines.

### **Overcoming discouragement**

Some years ago I was invited to participate in a fireside in which I outlined ways for people to overcome discouragement. At the beginning of the presentation, I invited those who were in attendance to write on a card a major challenge they were facing, one they would feel comfortable in having me share anonymously with other members of the group. When the problems came

forward, I was overcome by the significant issues faced by members who looked in control of their lives. Here are some they listed:

1. My farm is not making any money.
2. My son has a terminal illness.
3. Friction with a teenage child.
4. My oldest son is nearly blind.

5. Learning to accept the death of my son.

6. My husband sees the flaws but doesn't see the lovely things as much.

Many of us face significant challenges. Even the great prophet Enoch expressed sadness when he viewed the wickedness of the world: "And as Enoch saw this, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens: I will refuse to be comforted; but the Lord said unto Enoch: Lift up your heart, and be glad; and look" (Moses 7:44).

There are at least three steps to take when striving to overcome discouragement:

1. You can work on changing your attitude toward the problem. Even though you can't change the circumstances in which you work or live, you can always change your attitude.

2. You can receive help from those who are close to you—your family, friends, and ward members, those who love you the most.

3. You can develop a more powerful and complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Change your attitude**

By looking at a problem in a different way, it may be possible to reduce discouragement. I have been impressed with the pioneer story told about Zina Young. After experiencing the death of parents, crop failure, and sickness, she was encouraged with a spiritual experience that changed her attitude. While attempting to seek divine help, she heard her mother's voice: "Zina, any sailor can steer on a smooth sea, when rocks appear, sail around them." A prayer came quickly: "O Father in heaven, help me to be a good sailor, that my heart shall not break on the rocks of grief" ("Mother," *Young Woman's Journal*, Jan. 1911, 45). It is often difficult to change circumstances, but a positive attitude can help lift discouragement.

### **Accept help from others**

The next important point is to be willing to ask for help from those around you. Sometimes help comes from unexpected sources. A few years ago I stood in line in Chicago waiting to put my baggage on a plane. Behind me was an older man. After a few minutes he said to me, "Where are you going?" I said that I was heading for Salt Lake City. He said, "I'm going there too. Are you a Mormon?" I responded by saying I was. He said that he had been a Latter-day Saint all his life and had prepared himself finally to

go to the temple. While waiting for the plane, he opened his suitcase to show me all the missionary pictures that he had collected through the years. After some minutes, we were on our way and had a wonderful talk as we flew toward Utah. Upon arrival, we left the plane quickly. I made sure he knew where he was going and said good-bye.

Some weeks later I received this card in the mail: "Dear Brother Christensen, I lost your address and then found it. So I'm writing you a card. When I met you in Chicago, it was a prayer answered. I never travel anywhere. I wanted to be with someone. I have thought of you many times. I really enjoyed myself in Salt Lake City at the temple. Hope to see you someday. Thanks many times for the help you were to me." I wasn't planning to be useful that day, but I'm grateful for this brother who sought for extra help and I was nearby to assist.

### **Develop trust in the Lord**

I've talked about changing attitudes and receiving help from others. Now, let me mention the need to put more trust and faith in the Lord. I once talked to a woman who received help with her discouragement. While waiting for a temple session to begin, she picked up a Book of Mormon to read a verse. Her eyes fixed upon Alma 34:3:

"And as ye have desired of my beloved brother that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he hath spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your minds; yea, and he hath exhorted you unto faith and to patience."

The scripture in Alma was an answer to her prayer. The message was simple: the problem she faced was going to take a long time to solve. If we place a little more patience in the process and a greater amount of faith in the Lord, our challenges will find their way toward successful conclusions.

In the Doctrine and Covenants we read this: "If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful" (D&C 136:29).

I pray all of us may appreciate the challenges we have and try to improve our attitudes, even though our problems remain the same. Ask help from friends and family. I also testify that Jesus Christ lives and that He will help us through our discouragements if we will humbly

ask for His love. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Faust

The choir will now sing "Sweet Is the Work," following which Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our next speaker.

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The choir sang "Sweet Is the Work."

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## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A voice of warning

Because the Lord is kind, He calls servants to warn people of danger. That call to warn is made harder and more important by the fact that the warnings of most worth are about dangers that people don't yet think are real. Think of Jonah. He fled at first from the call from the Lord to warn the people of Nineveh who were blinded to the danger by sin. He knew that wicked people through the ages have rejected prophets and sometimes killed them. Yet when Jonah went forward with faith, the Lord blessed him with safety and success. (See Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10.)

We can also learn from our experiences as parents and as children. Those of us who have been parents have felt the anxiety of sensing danger our children cannot yet see. Few prayers are so fervent as those of a parent asking to know how to touch a child to move away from danger. Most of us have felt the blessing of hearing and heeding the warning voice of a parent.

### Mother's warning

I can still remember my mother speaking softly to me one Saturday after-

noon when, as a little boy, I asked her for permission to do something I thought was perfectly reasonable and which she knew was dangerous. I still am amazed at the power she was granted—I believe from the Lord—to turn me around with so few words. As I remember them, they were, "Oh, I suppose you *could* do that. But the *choice* is yours." The only warning was in the emphasis she put on the words *could* and *choice*. Yet that was enough for me.

Her power to warn with so few words sprang from three things I knew about her. First, I knew she loved me. Second, I knew she had already done what she wanted me to do and been blessed by it. And third, she had conveyed to me her sure testimony that the choice I had to make was so important that the Lord would tell me what to do if I asked Him. Love, example, and testimony: those were keys that day, and they have been whenever I have been blessed to hear and then heed the warning of a servant of the Lord.

### Responsibility to warn our neighbors

Our ability to touch others with our warning voice matters to all who are covenant disciples of Jesus Christ. Here

is the charge given to each of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81).

That command and warning of danger was given to those called as missionaries at the start of the Restoration. But the duty to warn our neighbor falls on all of us who have accepted the covenant of baptism. We are to talk with nonmember friends and relatives about the gospel. Our purpose is to invite them to be taught by the full-time missionaries who are called and set apart to teach. When a person has chosen to accept our invitation to be taught, a "referral" of great promise has been created, one far more likely to enter the waters of baptism and then to remain faithful.

### **Sweet moments of missionary work**

As a member of the Church, you can expect that the full-time or the stake missionaries will ask for the opportunity to visit with you in your home. They will help you make a list of people with whom you could share the gospel. They may suggest you think of relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances. They may ask you to set a date by which you will try to have the person or family prepared to be taught, perhaps even ready to invite the missionaries. I've had that experience. Because we in our family accepted that invitation from the missionaries, I was blessed to perform the baptism of a widow in her 80s, taught by sister missionaries.

When I placed my hands on her head to confirm her a member of the Church, I felt impressed to say that her choice to be baptized would bless generations of her family, after and before her. She's dead now, but in a few weeks I will be in the temple with her son as he is sealed to her.

You may have had such experiences with people you have invited to be taught, and so you know that few moments in life are sweeter. The Lord's words are true for the missionaries and for all of us: "And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!" (D&C 18:16).

### **The need to warn others is real**

The missionaries will help and encourage us, but whether such moments at the baptismal font and in the temple come more often will depend largely on how we see our charge and what we choose to do about it. The Lord would not use the word *warn* if there were no danger. Yet not many people we know sense it. They have learned to ignore the increasing evidence that society is unraveling and that their lives and family lack the peace they once thought was possible. That willingness to ignore the signs of danger can make it easy for you to think, *Why should I speak to anyone about the gospel who seems content? What danger is there to them or to me if I do or say nothing?*

Well, the danger may be hard to see, but it is real, both for them and for us. For instance, at some moment in the world to come, everyone you will ever meet will know what you know now. They will know that the only way to live forever in association with our families and in the presence of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, was to choose to enter into the gate by baptism at the hands of those with authority from God. They will know that the only way families can be together forever is to accept and keep sacred covenants offered in the temples of God on this earth. And they will know that you knew. And they will remember whether you offered them what someone had offered you.

### Do not procrastinate warning others

It's easy to say, "The time isn't right." But there is danger in procrastination. Years ago I worked for a man in California. He hired me; he was kind to me; he seemed to regard me highly. I may have been the only Latter-day Saint he ever knew well. I don't know all the reasons I found to wait for a better moment to talk with him about the gospel. I just remember my feeling of sorrow when I learned, after he had retired and I lived far away, that he and his wife had been killed in a late-night drive to their home in Carmel, California. He loved his wife. He loved his children. He had loved his parents. He loved his grandchildren, and he will love their children and will want to be with them forever.

Now, I don't know how the crowds will be handled in the world to come. But I suppose that I will meet him, that he will look into my eyes, and that I will see in them the question, "Hal, you knew. Why didn't you tell me?"

When I think of him, and when I think of that widow I baptized and her family who will now be sealed to her and to each other, I want to do better. I want to increase my power to invite people to be taught. With that desire and with faith that God will help us, we will do better. It isn't hard to see how.

### Love comes first

Love always comes first. A single act of kindness will seldom be enough. The Lord described the love we must feel, and that those we invite must recognize in us, with words like these: "Charity suffereth long," and it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7).

I've seen what "suffereth long" and "endureth all things" mean. A family moved into a house near us. The home

was new, so I was part of the crew of Latter-day Saints who spent a number of nights putting in landscaping. I remember the last night, standing next to the husband of the family as we finished. He surveyed our work and said to us standing nearby, "This is the third yard you Mormons have put in for us, and I think this is the best." And then he quietly but firmly told me of the great satisfaction he got from membership in his own church, a conversation we had often in the years he lived there.

In all that time, the acts of kindness extended to him and his family never ceased because the neighbors really came to love them. One evening I came home to see a truck in his driveway. I had been told they were moving to another state. I approached to see if I could help. I didn't recognize the man I saw loading household things into the truck. He said quietly as I drew near, "Hello, Brother Eyring." I hadn't recognized him because he was the son, now grown older, who had lived there, married, and moved away. And because of the love of many for him, he was now a baptized member of the Church. I don't know the end of that story because it will have no end. But I know that it begins with love.

### Be better examples

Second, we will need to be better examples of what we invite others to do. In a darkening world, this command of the Savior will become more important: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Most of us are modest enough to think that our small candle of example might be too dim to be noticed. But you and your family are watched more than you may realize. I had the chance in the spring of this year to attend and speak at meetings with nearly 300 ministers and

leaders of other churches. I visited alone with as many as I could. I asked them why they had been so attentive to my message, which was to recount the origins of the Church, to tell of the young Joseph Smith's First Vision and of living prophets. In every case, they gave essentially the same answer. They told a story of a person or a family—a story of knowing some of you. One repeated often was of a neighbor family, Latter-day Saints: "They were the finest family I have ever known." Often they spoke of some community effort or public response to a disaster where members of the Church worked in a way which to them seemed remarkable.

The people I met at those meetings could not yet recognize the truth in the doctrine, but they had already seen its fruit in your lives, and so they were ready to listen. They were ready to listen to the truths of the Restoration—that families can be sealed forever and that the gospel can change our very natures. They were ready because of your examples.

### **Invite with testimony**

The third thing we must do better is to invite with testimony. Love and example will open the way. But we still have to open our mouths and bear testimony. We are helped by a simple fact: truth and choice are inseparably connected. For everyone, there are some choices we must make to qualify for a testimony of spiritual truths. And for everyone, once we know a spiritual truth, we must choose whether we will conform our lives to it. That means there are some things we must do before we invite our friends to make choices. And when we bear testimony of truth to them, we must convey to them the choices which, once they know that truth, they must make. There are two important examples: inviting someone to read the Book of Mormon and inviting someone to agree to be taught by the missionaries.

For us to know that the Book of Mormon is true, we must read it and make the choice found in Moroni: pray to know if it is true. When we have done that, we can testify from personal experience to our friends that they can make that choice and know the same truth. When they know the Book of Mormon is the word of God, they will face another choice: whether to accept your invitation to be taught by the missionaries. To make that invitation with testimony, you will need to know that the missionaries are called as servants of God.

You can gain that testimony by choosing to invite the missionaries into your home to teach your family or friends. Missionaries will welcome the opportunity. When you sit with them as they teach, as I have, you will know they are inspired with power beyond their years and their education. Then, when you invite others to choose to be taught by the missionaries, you will be able to bear testimony that they will teach the truth and that they offer the choices which lead to happiness.

### **The Lord's assurance**

Perhaps some of us may find it hard to believe that we love enough, or that our lives are good enough, or that our power to testify is sufficient for our invitations to our neighbors to be accepted. But the Lord knew we might feel that way. Listen to His encouraging words, which He directed to be placed at the first of the Doctrine and Covenants, when He gave us our charge: "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days" (D&C 1:4).

And then listen to His description of the qualifications of those disciples—of us: "The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones" (D&C 1:19).

And then later, "That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the

weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:23).

And then again, "And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high" (D&C 1:28).

That assurance was given to the first missionaries in the Church and to missionaries today. But it is given to all of us as well. We must have the faith that we can love enough and that the gospel has touched our lives enough that our invitation to choose can be heard as coming from the Master, whose invitation it is.

His is the perfect example for what we are to do. You have felt His love and His caring, even when you did not respond, as those you approach with the gospel may not respond. Time after time He has invited you to be taught by His servants. You may not have recognized that in the visits of home teachers and visiting teachers or in a bishop's phone call, but those were His invitations to be helped and taught. And the Lord has always made consequences clear and then allowed us to choose for ourselves.

### **Choose the way of eternal life**

His servant Lehi taught his sons what has always been true for all of us: "And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit" (2 Nephi 2:28).

And then from Jacob this encouragement to meet your obligation to testify, as you must, that the choice to be taught by the missionaries is to enter the way toward eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God: "Therefore, cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye

are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life" (2 Nephi 10:23).

I testify that only accepting and living the restored gospel of Jesus Christ brings the peace the Lord promised in this life and the hope of eternal life in the world to come. I testify that we have been given the privilege and the obligation to offer the truth and the choices which lead to those blessings to our Heavenly Father's children, who are our brothers and our sisters. Jesus is the Christ, He lives, and this is His work. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Faust**

Elders Athos M. Amorim and Val R. Christensen of the Seventy have spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to the Young Women choir of the Murray, Utah, area for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon.

Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing a medley of "Love Is Spoken Here" and "Love at Home." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder F. Burton Howard of the Seventy.

## Elder David B. Haight

A friend of mine recently said to me, "Do you know what you and Steve Young, the quarterback of the 49ers, have in common?"

And I said, "I can think of a number of things—on either side of the fence." Then I said, "You tell me what we have in common."

And he said, "What you have in common is that we're wondering if you'll be back for the next season."

With the blessings of heaven and with a special, built-in nurse that I have, Ruby, to take care of me, and a loving family, I'm doing quite well.

I appreciate and am mindful of the pacemaker that I have for my heart, which comes in quite handy.

And I have a remodeled hip and a renovated knee that I consider just dandy.

My updated hearing aid and special glasses are quite a find,

But, oh, how I miss my mind.

### Sustaining the prophets

I'm honored to be able to stand here for a few minutes and bear my testimony to you and encourage you in this great work of which we are blessed to be a part. I watched the raising of your hands when President Monson was presenting the sustaining of the General Authorities of the Church, but particularly our prophet, and as I watched those hands and the enthusiasm with which you raised them, I thought, "Here we are with all the blessings we have and the comfort that we have," and I thought of some other such events that took place in the history of the Church.

In my mind's eye, I thought of the gatherings of our own family, which is scattered across America—in Georgia; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Pennsyl-

vania; Texas; California; and here in Salt Lake City. Of those little families in whatever the setting might be, there in their home or in the chapel, I thought I could see some of those little ones being taught to raise their hands and to be in harmony, perhaps their parents teaching them what we were doing. When we raised our hands, we not only just did it in motion because it looks like everybody's doing it, but because we accept and we're bearing witness about the knowledge we have and the testimony we have that President Hinckley is our prophet and our leader. We not only raise our hands in saying we sustain but that we follow his direction, that we listen, that we counsel, that we pray about it, that we're mindful of what comes from the lips of the prophet.

### Sustaining of the Prophet Joseph

The Prophet Joseph Smith had received some instruction regarding the organization of the Church, which we have by way of revelation as set forth in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Imagine—on April the 6th, 1830, in Fayette, New York, in the Peter Whitmer farmhouse—a meeting in that little log cabin, maybe 20 by 30 feet, where the Church was organized. Just imagine in that little setting, where he blessed Oliver and Oliver blessed him, as they followed the direction that they had received and the Church organization was presented to that little assembly.

Joseph and Oliver and Hyrum and Samuel Smith and the two Whitmers had been baptized and acted in order to be "agreeable to the laws" of New York (D&C 20:1). But just imagine as you run through your mind the spiritual setting in that assembly and the feeling that they must have had as the proposition was presented to them to sustain—what we

have done here today—to sustain the Prophet and Oliver as the first elders, to set the Church in motion. Some of the diaries and the accounts of that occasion indicate they had the feeling of heavenly beings in that meeting.

Some were rebaptized. Some were baptized on that occasion for the first time, including the Prophet's father and mother—just imagine! The sacrament was served for the first time in this dispensation in an official meeting of the Church, now organized. Imagine the feeling of the passing of the bread and the water, emblems of the torn flesh and the spilt blood of the Savior.

### **Sustaining the Twelve in 1844**

Imagine another setting of the sustaining in 1844, after the Prophet and Hyrum had been martyred, and of the meeting called in Nauvoo when Sidney Rigdon had now come from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, hopefully to take over as “guardian” and to be the leader of the Church. The members of the Twelve were hurrying from various parts of the world, returning to Nauvoo. Think of that setting and the meeting when Sidney Rigdon presented the proposition that he would logically be the one to be called because he was the First Counselor, even though he was in some disfavor with the Prophet. And imagine Brigham Young being there and speaking for the Twelve, explaining to that body of Saints how the faithful brethren had been taught by the Prophet regarding the Twelve and the authority that rested with the Twelve.

After they had presented both sides of the case and the voting took place, some of them stated that they saw and felt a change in Brigham Young as he spoke, that they thought they heard the voice of the Prophet, that they thought they could even see some facial features of the Prophet upon Brigham Young.

I'm saying this to you because as the years go on and as we learn more and as we're more sensitive to the spiritual direction that is in this work, we sense and feel the hand of the Lord in it. But think of the sustaining in that setting in 1844, to have the Church rest in the hands of the Twelve.

### **Sustaining the First Presidency in 1847**

Then there was another setting later on, in 1847, when the Saints were accumulating on the Iowa side of the Missouri River. Brigham Young had been here in the Salt Lake Valley with that first company of the Saints, but in December he had gone back to the Missouri to meet with the Saints there. And in a setting in Kanesville, there were nine of the Twelve assembled: two were in the valley here, one had gone to Texas, and nine were there. In that setting, in the Orson Hyde home, the First Presidency was reorganized on December the 5th, 1847, but they needed to have it ratified by the Saints. And so that meeting was postponed for three weeks so they could build a little log tabernacle in Kanesville. And in three weeks, with the workmen there and the members of the Church who had come in by wagons getting ready to cross the Missouri and head for the valley, they built a little tabernacle.

In that meeting was presented a proposition that the Presidency of the Church would be reorganized, but they needed a sustaining like we've done here today, like that opportunity that is ours to raise our hands and sustain the prophet. So the First Presidency was reorganized; Brigham Young had selected Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards to be his counselors. Thus, it takes the sustaining of the people to give the leaders of the Church the authority that the Lord has designated by revelation that is necessary.

And so, as we see the work move forward and move on, I would only declare to you as I stand before you today that in those 90 and more years that I've had, as I've witnessed and felt and seen and been part of the spiritual experiences that have been mine, this is the work of the Lord. It's just as has been revealed. I've sensed it and I feel it, and I so declare to you.

**"He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."**

I remind you that the Savior taught, as recorded in Matthew, that whosoever "findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). Now, some scholars and others have thought: "Well, that's a paradox. It's probably a mistranslation. It really doesn't make very good sense." It's very clear in my mind, and I hope it is in yours, that as we live in the world of materialism, in Babylon that we live in today, and see the happenings of the world, whether you read the financial pages or the political pages or whatever, you can sense and feel that where we find our strength and where we find the answer to our challenges and our problems would be as we listen to the voice of the prophet—God's prophet here upon the earth.

In that statement of the Savior's, we see that as we live in the materialistic world, we're concerned with only the materialistic side of life. We think of all we can accumulate for ourselves. We're not thinking of others or not living to help other people live on a higher plane. The Lord is saying that when you find the life that He exemplifies, then you lose your self-centered life: "He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."

When we're concerned about doing something for someone else and when we're thinking about sharing the gospel or helping someone move on to a higher plane morally or physically, when we're

doing something for someone else and sharing with them, then we're coming to their aid, we're coming to their rescue. In all that, we find the life that the Savior talks about, the eternal blessings, the heavenly blessings, the temple blessings, all of those blessings of a loving family that we can have.

**"I am a child of God"**

I leave you my love, my witness, my knowledge, and my own testimony that God lives, He is our Father, that we are children of God, and as the little, simple song says:

I am a child of God,  
And he has sent me here,  
Has given me an earthly home  
With parents kind and dear.

Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.  
Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.  
["I Am a Child of God," *Children's Songbook*, 2-3; *Hymns*, no. 301]

It's as simple, it's as pure and as clean as that little, simple song. It teaches us what we need to know. I'm happy on this day and honored to have raised my hand in sustaining President Gordon B. Hinckley as President of the Church, and his counselors, Thomas S. Monson and James E. Faust, as the Presidency—with the Quorum of the Twelve and all of the other General Authorities. The gospel is true; it is the hope of the world; it will move onward to accomplish all that it must do. I so leave you my love and witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang a medley of "Love Is Spoken Here" and "Love at Home."

Elder F. Burton Howard offered the benediction.

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## GENERAL PRIESTHOOD SESSION

The general priesthood session, the third session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference, convened in the Tabernacle at 6:00 P.M. on Saturday, October 3, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

Music was provided by a combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

President Hinckley opened the meeting with the following remarks.

### President Gordon B. Hinckley

We welcome you, brethren, to this general priesthood session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

These services are being relayed by closed-circuit and satellite transmission to holders of the priesthood gathered in the Assembly Hall, the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the BYU Marriott Center, the Missionary Training Center, and in locations in many countries throughout the world. I think that with-

out question there is no gathering of men anywhere as large as this great priesthood meeting.

The singing during this session will be furnished by the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus combined men's choir, under the direction of Brothers Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden, with Richard Elliott at the organ.

The choir will open this session by singing "Come, O Thou King of Kings." The invocation will then be offered by Elder John M. Madsen of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, O Thou King of Kings."

Elder John M. Madsen offered the invocation.

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### President Hinckley

The choir will now sing "Awake, My Sons, Awake," and Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve will then speak to us.

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The choir sang "Awake, My Sons, Awake."

## Elder Dallin H. Oaks

### The Aaronic Priesthood and the sacrament

My beloved brethren, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I address my remarks to the young men who hold the Aaronic Priesthood and to the bishops and counselors who preside over them. I will speak about the sacred activities of Aaronic Priesthood holders in preparing, admin-

istering, and passing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the members of the Church.

### Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

On May 15, 1829, John the Baptist restored the Aaronic Priesthood to the earth. He did so by laying his hands upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and speaking these words:

"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness" (D&C 13:1).

Later the Lord revealed these further truths:

"The lesser priesthood . . . holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" (D&C 84:26-27).

What does it mean that the Aaronic Priesthood holds "the key of the ministering of angels" and of the "gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins"? The meaning is found in the ordinance of baptism and in the sacrament. Baptism is for the remission of sins, and the sacrament is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. Both should be preceded by repentance. When we keep the covenants made in these ordinances, we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit.

### **Baptism and the sacrament**

We begin with the doctrine as taught by the Lord. During His ministry, Jesus taught that baptism is necessary for salvation. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Baptism is the first of the saving ordinances. When we are baptized, we covenant that we will take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and serve Him and keep His commandments.

At the conclusion of His ministry, Jesus introduced the sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. He broke bread and blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

### **The Holy Ghost and the sacrament**

When He introduced the sacrament, the Savior also gave teachings and promises about the Holy Ghost. On that sacred occasion known as the Last Supper, Jesus explained the mission of the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. The Comforter would testify of Him and reveal other truths. Jesus also explained that He had to leave His disciples in order for the Comforter to come to them. When I depart, He told them, "I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). After His Resurrection, He told His Apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were given "power from on high" (Luke 24:49). That power came when "the promise of the Holy Ghost" was "shed forth" upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

Similarly, when the Savior introduced the sacrament in the New World, He promised, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled" (3 Nephi 20:8). The meaning of that promise is evident: "Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit" (3 Nephi 20:9).

The close relationship between partaking of the sacrament and the companionship of the Holy Ghost is explained in the revealed prayer on the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name

of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we do so, we have the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77).

### Repentance and the sacrament

To have the continuous companionship of the Holy Ghost is the most precious possession we can have in mortality. The *gift* of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood after our baptism. But to realize the blessings of that gift, we must keep ourselves free from sin. When we commit sin, we become unclean and the Spirit of the Lord withdraws from us. The Spirit of the Lord does not dwell in "unholy temples" (see Mosiah 2:36-37; Alma 34:35-36; Helaman 4:24), and no unclean thing can dwell in His presence (see Ephesians 5:5; 1 Nephi 10:21; Alma 7:21; Moses 6:57).

A few weeks ago I used a chain saw to cut down a tree in my backyard. It was a dirty job, and when I was done I was splattered with a filthy mixture of sawdust and oil. In that condition I did not want anyone to see me. I just wanted to be cleansed in water so I would again feel comfortable in the presence of other people.

Not one of you young men and not one of your leaders has lived without sin since his baptism. Without some provision for further cleansing after our baptism, each of us is lost to things spiritual. We cannot have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and at the final judgment we would be bound to be "cast off forever" (1 Nephi 10:21). How grateful we are that the Lord has provided a process for each baptized member of His Church to be periodically cleansed from the soil of sin. The sacrament is an essential part of that process.

We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament in compliance with its covenants. When we renew our baptismal covenants in this way, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. In this way we are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us. The importance of this is evident in the Lord's commandment that we partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:8-9).

We cannot overstate the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood in this. All of these vital steps pertaining to the remission of sins are performed through the saving ordinance of baptism and the renewing ordinance of the sacrament. Both of these ordinances are officiated by holders of the Aaronic Priesthood under the direction of the bishopric, who exercise the keys of the gospel of repentance and of baptism and the remission of sins.

### The ministering of angels

In a closely related way, these ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are also vital to the ministering of angels.

"The word 'angel' is used in the scriptures for any heavenly being bearing God's message" (George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist [1987], 54). The scriptures recite numerous instances where an angel appeared personally. Angelic appearances to Zacharias and Mary (see Luke 1) and to King Benjamin and Nephi (see Mosiah 3:2; 3 Nephi 7:17-18) are only a few examples. When I was young, I thought such personal appearances were the only meaning of the ministering of angels. As a young holder of the Aaronic Priesthood, I did not think I would see an angel, and I wondered what such appearances had to do with the Aaronic Priesthood.

But the ministering of angels can also be unseen. Angelic messages can be delivered by a voice or merely by thoughts or feelings communicated to the mind. President John Taylor described "the action of the angels, or messengers of God, upon our minds, so that the heart can conceive . . . revelations from the eternal world" (*The Gospel Kingdom*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1943], 31).

Nephi described three manifestations of the ministering of angels when he reminded his rebellious brothers that (1) they had "seen an angel," (2) they had "heard his voice from time to time," and (3) also that an angel had "spoken unto [them] in a still small voice" though they were "past feeling" and "could not feel his words" (1 Nephi 17:45). The scriptures contain many other statements that angels are sent to teach the gospel and bring men to Christ (see Hebrews 1:14; Alma 39:19; Moroni 7:25, 29, 31–32; D&C 20:35). Most angelic communications are felt or heard rather than seen.

How does the Aaronic Priesthood hold the key to the ministering of angels? The answer is the same as for the Spirit of the Lord.

In general, the blessings of spiritual companionship and communication are available only to those who are clean. As explained earlier, through the Aaronic Priesthood ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, we are cleansed of our sins and promised that if we keep our covenants we will always have His Spirit to be with us. I believe that promise not only refers to the Holy Ghost but also to the ministering of angels, for "angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ" (2 Nephi 32:3). So it is that those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood open the door for all Church members who worthily partake of the sacrament to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and the ministering of angels.

### **Do not do anything that would distract**

The doctrines I have just discussed are contained in the scriptures. From the scriptures we also know that those who officiate in the priesthood act in behalf of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 36:2). I will now suggest how teachers and priests and deacons should carry out their sacred responsibilities to act in behalf of the Lord in preparing, administering, and passing the sacrament. I will not suggest detailed rules, since the circumstances in various wards and branches in our worldwide Church are so different that a specific rule that seems required in one setting may be inappropriate in another. Rather, I will suggest a principle based on the doctrines. If all understand this principle and act in harmony with it, there should be little need for rules. If rules or counseling are needed in individual cases, local leaders can provide them, consistent with the doctrines and their related principles.

The principle I suggest to govern those officiating in the sacrament—whether preparing, administering, or passing—is that they should not do anything that would distract any member from his or her worship and renewal of covenants. This principle of nondistractation suggests some companion principles.

### **Be clean and reverent**

Deacons, teachers, and priests should always be clean in appearance and reverent in the manner in which they perform their solemn and sacred responsibilities. Teachers' special assignments in preparing the sacrament are the least visible but should still be done with dignity, quietly and reverently. Teachers should always remember that the emblems they are preparing represent the body and blood of our Lord.

### **Speak the sacrament prayers clearly**

To avoid distracting from the sacred occasion, priests should speak the sacrament prayers clearly and distinctly. Prayers that are rattled off swiftly or mumbled inaudibly will not do. All present should be helped to understand an ordinance and covenants so important that the Lord prescribed the exact words to be uttered. All should be helped to focus on those sacred words as they renew their covenants by partaking.

On this subject I feel to share a painful experience from my youth. As a 16-year-old priest, I was just beginning a part-time job as a radio announcer at a local station. After I offered a prayer at the sacrament table in our ward, a girl who was present told me I sounded like I was reading a commercial. Can you imagine the shame I felt? After 50 years that rebuke still stings. Brethren, remember the significance of those sacred prayers. You are praying as a servant of the Lord in behalf of the entire congregation. Speak to be heard and understood, and say it like you mean it.

### **Be orderly**

Deacons should pass the sacrament in a reverent and orderly manner, with no needless motions or expressions that call attention to themselves. In all their actions they should avoid distracting any member of the congregation from worship and covenant making.

### **Be well groomed and modestly dressed**

All who officiate in the sacrament—in preparing, administering, or passing—should be well groomed and modestly dressed, with nothing about their personal appearance that calls special attention to themselves. In appearance as well as actions, they should avoid distracting anyone present from full attention to the

worship and covenant making that are the purpose of this sacred ordinance.

### **Be worthy to participate**

This principle of nondistractedness applies to things unseen as well as seen. If someone officiating in this sacred ordinance is unworthy to participate, and this is known to anyone present, their participation is a serious distraction to that person. Young men, if any of you is unworthy, talk to your bishop without delay. Obtain his direction on what you should do to qualify yourself to participate in your priesthood duties worthily and appropriately.

### **Sing the sacrament hymn**

I have a final suggestion. With the single exception of those priests occupied breaking the bread, all who hold the Aaronic Priesthood should join in singing the sacrament hymn by which we worship and prepare to partake. No one needs that spiritual preparation more than the priesthood holders who will officiate in it. My young brethren, it is important that you sing the sacrament hymn. Please do so.

### **These ordinances are vital**

The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of “the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins” (D&C 84:27). The cleansing power of our Savior’s Atonement is renewed for us as we partake of the sacrament. The promise that we “may always have his Spirit to be with [us]” (D&C 20:77) is essential to our spirituality. The ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are vital to all of this. I testify that this is true, and I pray that our brethren of the Aaronic Priesthood will understand the importance of their sacred responsibilities and act worthily in them, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Hinckley

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us. We shall now be pleased to

hear from Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Presidency of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder H. Bryan Richards, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at the April conference.

## Elder D. Todd Christofferson

### Elders quorum helps a brother

In 1918 Brother George Goates was a farmer who raised sugar beets in Lehi, Utah. Winter came early that year and froze much of his beet crop in the ground. For George and his young son Francis, the harvest was slow and difficult. Meanwhile, an influenza epidemic was raging. The dreaded disease claimed the lives of George's son Charles and three of Charles's small children—two little girls and a boy. In the course of only six days, a grieving George Goates made three separate trips to Ogden, Utah, to bring the bodies home for burial. At the end of this terrible interlude, George and Francis hitched up their wagon and headed back to the beet field.

"[On the way] they passed wagon after wagon-load of beets being hauled to the factory and driven by neighborhood farmers. As they passed by, each driver would wave a greeting: 'Hi ya, Uncle George,' 'Sure sorry, George,' 'Tough break, George,' 'You've got a lot of friends, George.'

"On the last wagon was . . . freckled-faced Jasper Rolfe. He waved a cheery greeting and called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George.'

"[Brother Goates] turned to Francis and said: 'I wish it was all of ours.'

"When they arrived at the farm gate, Francis jumped down off the big red beet wagon and opened the gate as [his father] drove onto the field. [George] pulled up, stopped the team, . . . and scanned the field. . . . There wasn't a

sugar beet on the whole field. Then it dawned upon him what Jasper Rolfe meant when he called out: 'That's all of 'em, Uncle George.'

"[George] got down off the wagon, picked up a handful of the rich, brown soil he loved so much, and then . . . a beet top, and he looked for a moment at these symbols of his labor, as if he couldn't believe his eyes.

"Then [he] sat down on a pile of beet tops—this man who brought four of his loved ones home for burial in the course of only six days; made caskets, dug graves, and even helped with the burial clothing—this amazing man who never faltered, nor flinched, nor wavered throughout this agonizing ordeal—sat down on a pile of beet tops and sobbed like a little child.

"Then he arose, wiped his eyes, . . . looked up at the sky, and said: 'Thanks, Father, for the elders of our ward.'"<sup>1</sup>

It is of such elders that I wish to speak this evening. I wish to speak of brothers in the priesthood. I wish to speak of the priesthood quorum.

### The priesthood quorum

President Boyd K. Packer has explained that "in ancient days when a man was appointed to a select body, his commission, always written in Latin, outlined the responsibility of the organization, defined who should be members, and then invariably contained the words: *quorum vos unum* meaning, 'of whom we will that you be one.'"<sup>2</sup>

"In the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord instructed that the priesthood should be organized into quorums, meaning selected assemblies of brethren given authority that His business might be transacted and His work proceed.

"A quorum is a brotherhood. . . . [Membership in a quorum] becomes a right of one ordained to an office in the priesthood."<sup>3</sup>

The scriptures establish the quorums of the priesthood and their respective duties in the Church of Jesus Christ today, including the First Presidency,<sup>4</sup> the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,<sup>5</sup> and the Quorums of the Seventy.<sup>6</sup> The "standing ministers" in the stakes of Zion are identified, the high priests and elders,<sup>7</sup> as are the three quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood: the priests, teachers, and deacons.<sup>8</sup>

Sixty years ago Elder Stephen L. Richards, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, provided a characteristically cogent statement of the function of priesthood quorums. Said he, "A quorum is three things: first, a class; second, a fraternity; and third, a service unit."<sup>9</sup> Let us examine briefly these three aspects of priesthood quorums.

### A class

First, a quorum is a class. When a priesthood quorum or group meets as a class, its members can learn together, be "nourished by the good word of God,"<sup>10</sup> and grow spiritually. We study so that we may better teach.<sup>11</sup> Beginning this year, the priesthood has a curriculum program, shared in part by the Relief Society, that can revitalize quorums and make them "school[s] of the prophets."<sup>12</sup> On the second and third Sundays of the month, the course of study is based on the teachings of Presidents of the Church. The resource for instruction in 1998-99 is a compilation of excerpts from the sermons of Brigham Young. It is a text rich in doctrine and application. The curriculum continues on the fourth Sunday with

*Teachings for Our Time*, an opportunity to study current gospel issues approved by the First Presidency. Brethren, you who are the leaders of quorums and groups, please study the instructions that have been provided by the First Presidency regarding this new curriculum until you understand them fully. Then implement them precisely.

The Aaronic Priesthood quorums are also blessed with superb class material, although it wasn't always so. At the beginning of this century, while some stakes prepared printed, systematic lesson outlines for Aaronic Priesthood quorums, others left the young men to find their own way. This resulted "in some unusual priesthood meetings by our standards. One lesser priesthood group, for example, divided its class time between religious lessons and such adventure books as *Tom Sawyer*, *The Jungle Book*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Pigs Is Pigs*, and *Frank Among the Rancheros*."<sup>13</sup>

Today such "cultural enrichment" is for other times and settings; when the quorum meets as a class, the time is reserved for things of a higher order. Today's Aaronic Priesthood curriculum includes such topics as "covenants guide our actions," "respect for mothers and their divine role," "valuing and encouraging people with disabilities," and "moral courage," to name just a few. Aaronic Priesthood quorums deserve a real priesthood class as part of a solid quorum experience.

### A fraternity

Second, a quorum is a fraternity. In the October general conference of 1982, Elder Robert L. Backman recounted the experience of a young man named Mark Peterson. Shortly after his ordination as a deacon, the deacons quorum presidency scheduled an appointment with Mark and his parents at their home.

"Promptly at the hour set, the doorbell rang. The members of the presi-

dency stood on the porch, dressed in suits, white shirts, and ties, and each one carrying his scriptures.

"Sitting down with Mark and his parents, they began with prayer, then handed an agenda to everyone there.

"The president then opened the scriptures, having Mark and his father read those references which speak of the power of the Aaronic Priesthood, what it is, and the particular duties of a deacon.

"The president then spoke about Mark's particular responsibilities and duties: how he should dress, how he should pass the sacrament, act as a messenger, collect fast offerings. And then they asked him if he had any questions.

"At the end of the visit they welcomed him to the quorum and offered help whenever he needed it. As they left, Mark . . . said to his Dad: 'They were awesome!'"<sup>14</sup>

The fraternity of priesthood quorums can indeed be awesome. When I became a member of a Quorum of the Seventy, I assumed that I might be accepted by my brethren in the course of time if I were able to prove myself worthy of their association. I hoped someday to measure up and be approved. I was surprised to find myself immediately welcomed and from the outset treated as a brother, as an equal by men much more talented and accomplished than I. I have been supported and encouraged, loved and tutored in my quorum from my very first day of membership in it. Consequently, I feel a deep desire to contribute to the work of the quorum and to assist my brethren as much as I can.

President David O. McKay taught: "If priesthood meant only personal distinction or individual elevation, there would be no need of groups or quorums. The very existence of such groups, established by divine authorization, proclaims our dependence upon one another, the indispensable need of mutual help and assistance."<sup>15</sup>

And let it be remembered that nowhere is the fraternity of quorums more crucial than in the case of newly baptized brethren and their families. Quorum and group leaders should provide the leading voice and laboring oar in every ward and branch council regarding retention of converts.

### A service unit

Third, a quorum is a service unit. When I spoke earlier of the new Melchizedek Priesthood curriculum, I did not mention what takes place on the first Sunday of the month. That is a very special meeting. On the first Sunday, priesthood bearers meet in quorums and groups to learn their duties and plan their work. On the agenda are training and discussion, reports and assignments. It is a time to learn how to administer correctly priesthood ordinances and blessings. It is a time for the business of the priesthood. It is a time for putting the priesthood to work. I can imagine just such a meeting 80 years ago in Lehi, Utah, as the elders laid a plan to harvest the sugar beets of their beleaguered brother, George Goates.

Both Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums will find their soul in service. Our great presiding High Priest and exemplar is Jesus Christ, who declared:

"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

"And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."<sup>16</sup>

Years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley expressed something of a vision regarding quorums in the priesthood. He said: "It will be a marvelous day, my brethren—it will be a day of fulfillment of the purposes of the Lord—when our priesthood quorums become

an anchor of strength to every man belonging thereto, when each such man may appropriately be able to say, 'I am a member of a priesthood quorum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I stand ready to assist my brethren in all of their needs, as I am confident they stand ready to assist me in mine. Working together, we shall grow spiritually as covenant sons of God. Working together, we can stand, without embarrassment and without fear, against every wind of adversity that might blow, be it economic, social, or spiritual.'"<sup>17</sup>

We must not delay or wait longer for this great day of fulfillment. Each of you who has received an ordination in the priesthood belongs to a quorum. If you live in a place where there are not enough brethren to form a quorum, you are a member of a priesthood group that will become a quorum. Resolve now to do all within your power to make of your priesthood quorum one worthy of the name and one faithful to its mission. Study with your brethren in the quorum class. Stand with them in the quorum fraternity. Work with them in quorum service. The quorum, brethren, the quorum, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Les Goates, quoted by Vaughn J. Featherstone, in Conference Report, Apr. 1973, 46–48; or *Ensign*, July 1973, 36–37.

2. *A Royal Priesthood* (Melchizedek Priesthood personal study guide, 1975–76), 131.
3. "What Every Elder Should Know—and Every Sister as Well: A Primer on Principles of Priesthood Government," *Ensign*, Feb. 1993, 9.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 102:9–10; 107:9, 22, 78–81, 91–92.
5. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:26–27; 107:23–24, 33, 35, 58.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:25–26, 34, 38, 93–97.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:38–45; 43:15–16; 107:7, 10–12, 17, 89; 124:133–35, 137.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:46–60; 107:60–63, 85–88.
9. In Conference Report, Oct. 1938, 118.
10. Moroni 6:4.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:13–14.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 88:127.
13. William Hartley, "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908–1922," *BYU Studies*, winter 1973, 138.
14. In Conference Report, Oct. 1982, 53–54; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 38.
15. In Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 84; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1968, 84.
16. Mark 10:43–45.
17. "Welfare Responsibilities of the Priesthood Quorums," *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 86.

## Elder H. Bryan Richards

### Prepare young men to serve missions

"And Joshua said unto all the people [of Israel], . . . choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:2, 15).

As in the days of Joshua, so it is with us today. As parents, one of the choices we must make is whether or not we are going to prepare our young sons to serve full-time missions.

To help us understand the importance of this decision, let me quote from the prophets of our time.

President Howard W. Hunter noted: "Earlier prophets have taught that every able, worthy young man should serve a full-time mission. I emphasize this need today" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 118; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 88).

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said: "I say what has been said before, that missionary work is essentially a

priesthood responsibility. As such, our young men must carry the major burden. This is their responsibility and their obligation" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

What would the Lord say to a young man today who was making the decision to serve a full-time mission? In words filled with love, He said to 19-year-old Orson Pratt:

"My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you. . . .

". . . Blessed are you because you have believed;

"And more blessed are you because you are called of me to preach my gospel" (D&C 34:1, 4-5).

Can you feel the love that the Lord has for a young man who has answered the call to serve?

As parents we have the responsibility to prepare our sons to be worthy and to have a desire to serve the Lord. We are stewards of those sons held in reserve for this day. The Lord has entrusted them to us, and we will be held accountable for them. One of the blessings of that stewardship will be preparing our sons to serve the Lord.

### **Responsibilities of parents and leaders**

May I speak to the parents of the Church and their sons for a moment. One of the powerful stories in the Book of Mormon teaches us of the influence that parents can have in the lives of their young sons. This is the account of 2,060 young men who volunteered to defend the liberty of their country. They were led into battle by Helaman, yet "there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds" (Alma 57:25). Why? Because "they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness." Then Helaman explains the reason behind this great miracle: "I did remember

the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them" (Alma 57:21). What did their mothers teach them? "That there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power" (Alma 57:26).

Parents, do you realize what great power you have in the lives of your sons? When you teach them that there is a just God and that He wants every able and worthy young man to serve a mission, your sons will have the faith to answer the Lord's call.

Bishops, as part of your stewardship you have a tremendous responsibility to prepare your young men to serve full-time missions. Begin early. Help them understand Alma's experiment. Plant the seed to serve a mission in their hearts. Then have them ask the Lord if it is a good seed. Then, if you help them nourish that seed, it will grow into the miracle of having that young man serve a mission.

I will always be grateful that Sister Richards, bishops, and priesthood leaders taught our sons and prepared them to serve missions.

How can we achieve a significant increase in the number of young men serving full-time missions? First of all, parents must understand the responsibility they have. They must ask our Heavenly Father to know how to prepare their sons to serve missions. That doesn't mean only those from America, England, Mongolia, or Brazil, but every able and worthy young man in the Church. Bishops, you must follow the same process.

### **Teach the worth of the soul**

President Boyd K. Packer has said, "True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1986, 20; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17). The doctrine that will change the behavior of our young men regarding missions is understanding the worth

of a single soul. Jesus Christ paid the supreme sacrifice in providing the infinite Atonement, which provides the only way for us to return and live with our Heavenly Father. When parents, bishops, and our young men understand this true doctrine, our young men will be prepared and have a desire to serve.

### **Importance of missionary service**

May I quote from Elder Joe J. Christensen:

"The Lord did not say, 'Go on a mission if it fits your schedule, or if you happen to feel like it, or if it doesn't interfere with your scholarship, your romance, or your educational plans.' Preaching the gospel is a commandment and not merely a suggestion. It is a blessing and a privilege. . . . Remember, . . . the Lord and His prophets are counting on you" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 56; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 41).

There is not anything a young man can do that will be any more important than serving a full-time mission. The good they do as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ will carry on into eternity.

The greatest army of missionaries ever assembled in the history of the world is serving today. Don't let your sons miss being part of that great army.

These young men, trusted and proven before they came to earth, are not ordinary young men. They are choice spirits that have been held in reserve to come forth in this day.

As we ponder the great charge given to us by the Lord to proclaim the gospel to all the world, will you in your personal and family prayers plead with our Heavenly Father that every young man in the Church today will have the desire and live worthy to serve a full-time mission?

May our Heavenly Father bless us with the commitment to prepare our young men to serve. May the young men of the Church today become like the sons of Helaman, following every word of the Lord with exactness. May they become a light on a hill that shines brightly and says to all the world that they, like Joshua of old, have chosen to serve the Lord! I pray that it will be so, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elder D. Todd Christofferson has just spoken to us, and he was followed by Elder H. Bryan Richards.

President James E. Faust will speak to us next. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "Ye Elders of Israel."

## **President James E. Faust**

My beloved brethren, I express my love and appreciation to you for your devotion and faithfulness as the bearers of the priesthood of God.

### **Visit to World War I sites in France**

Earlier this year, my three sons and I visited the sites in France where my father fought in the U.S. Army in World War I. Great was the suffering and terrible were the consequences to all in-

volved in that war. Millions lost their lives. Although my father was not killed, he carried mental and physical scars until he died. Despite his terrifying experiences, he prefaced his diary as follows: "If I had to do it again, I would do it because it was my duty."<sup>1</sup> As we traveled 80 years later through the beautiful countryside, we visited battle sites and cemeteries of the combatants on both sides. In the military cemetery outside Paris, with my hand resting on Stanford

Hinckley's cross, I called President Hinckley on a cellular phone to express my feelings on that occasion.

World War I was particularly tragic for our family because my father had some second cousins serving on the other side of that conflict in some of the same general battle areas. We eventually became acquainted with these relatives and found them to be decent, God-fearing Christians. They had nothing to do with the grand geopolitics or causes of the war. Like my father, they were serving their country because it was their duty. World War I and the wars that followed brought such great suffering and caused the deaths of countless innocent people. In its simplest terms, wars are so often caused by a great lust for power.

### **Priesthood is the greatest power source**

Tonight I wish to talk to you young men of the priesthood about power and its proper use and its companion, the performance of duty. Power is highly attractive. It can be both good and bad. In your formative years, you young men are attracted to power figures of one kind or another. These often include sports idols, entertainers, people of wealth, and those who have political power. Unfortunately, some young men, particularly those who fall short scholastically, who don't make the team, or who are not chosen to sing in a specially selected choir may feel rejected and be lured into groups that they think will compensate for their inadequacies. This hunger for acceptance or power draws them like a moth to a flame to street gangs and other associations that can be violent and encourage habits which are dangerous to the body and to the soul.

You young holders of the priesthood have access to the greatest power source in the world. It is the priesthood of God. In complete contrast to other power sources, the holy priesthood,

through its proper exercise, continues to build spiritual and physical strength which endures through the eternities. It is "inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" and can be "handled only upon the principles of righteousness."<sup>2</sup> Regarding the priesthood, the Prophet Joseph Smith stated:

"[It] is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation, and every important matter is revealed from heaven. . . . It is the channel through which the Almighty . . . has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time."<sup>3</sup>

### **Priesthood power comes from faithfulness**

This power comes in proportion to our faithfulness in fulfilling our duties. As the Prophet Joseph observed, "The Lord gave us power in proportion to the work to be done, and strength according to the race set before us, and grace and help as our needs required."<sup>4</sup> As an example, the prophet Elijah, using his priesthood, was able to call forth fire from heaven to demonstrate the power of God.

Before President Hugh B. Brown was a General Authority, he served in England as an officer in the Canadian army and had great power. Men stood at attention before him and called him "sir." One day Brother Brown received a message that he was wanted in the hospital. When he got there, someone directed him to a little room where a sick young man lay. Brother Brown remembered that he had once been that young man's Sunday School teacher. "Brother Brown," said the young man, "would you use your authority in my behalf? The doctors say I cannot live. Will you give me a blessing?" All the pride Brother Brown felt in wearing the uniform of the king disappeared as he laid his hands

upon the boy's head and gave him a blessing. The help that the boy needed was not from any authority of an officer in the king's army but from the authority of the priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

With the power of the priesthood come weighty responsibilities. Indeed, we can enjoy priesthood power only when we do our duty. The priesthood of this Church has in the past received some hard lessons regarding its duty. The early brethren were untested and untried. Under the Prophet Joseph's leadership, the Lord taught them and sifted them. They were persecuted and driven unmercifully in learning to do their duty. Many failed. Three times some of the early brethren endured searing, refining trials before they ultimately found refuge in these mountain valleys.

### **The refining trials of Zion's Camp**

The first of these tests was Zion's Camp in the spring and summer of 1834. The second came just four years later in removing thousands of Saints from the state of Missouri to Illinois. Twelve years later came the epic exodus from Illinois to Winter Quarters and the next year to the mountain valleys of the western part of the continent.

Zion's Camp was formed to reestablish the Saints in Jackson County, Missouri. In this "effort to redeem Zion,"<sup>6</sup> some 200 men traveled more than a thousand miles in the most trying circumstances under the personal leadership of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

George A. Smith, age 16, was selected to go on the camp and recorded some of the suffering, trials, and hardships the brethren endured. He stated that on May 26, 1834, "the day was exceedingly hot and we suffered much from thirst and were compelled to drink water from sloughs which were filled with living creatures. Here I learned to strain wigglers with my teeth."<sup>7</sup> The next

day, an exhausted Solomon Humphrey lay down on the ground and fell asleep. "When he awoke he saw a rattlesnake coiled up within one foot of his head and [lying] between him and his hat, which he had in his hand when he fell asleep. The brethren gathered around him, saying, 'It is a rattlesnake, let us kill it.' Brother Humphrey said, 'No! I'll protect him, you shant hurt him for he and I have had a good nap together.'"<sup>8</sup> I have no desire to have a nap with a rattlesnake!

Brother George A. Smith recorded: "The Prophet Joseph took a full share of the fatigues of the entire journey. In addition to the care of providing for the Camp and presiding over it, he walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year. But during the entire trip he never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of . . . scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, . . . maggotty bacon and cheese, &c. . . . Yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish. . . . Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children. There were many, however, in the Camp who never murmured and who were always ready and willing to do as our leaders desired."<sup>9</sup>

Although Zion's Camp failed in its stated purpose of restoring the Saints to their lands in Jackson County, Missouri, it was invaluable as a stern schooling. They learned that faith is more important than life itself. At a conference held February 14, 1835, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy were chosen from the ranks of those who had served in Zion's Camp. These valiant brethren led the Church for the next 50 years.

### **Caring for the poor is a priesthood duty**

The Lord taught another great priesthood duty during this period of Church history. In section 104 the Lord set forth the order of the Church concerning the poor:

"Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."<sup>10</sup> With this precedent, in January 1839, during the exodus from Missouri, many of the brethren covenanted to "stand by and assist one another . . . till there shall not be one left who desires to remove from the state."<sup>11</sup>

In the bitter cold of February 1839, Daniel Stillwell Thomas reflected, "Before we crossed [the Mississippi River,] we unloaded our wagon and sent it back to assist in removing the poor and thus to save their lives, the mob still threatening them."<sup>12</sup> Daniel Thomas had five children and only one pair of shoes between them, yet he still sent the wagon back to save the destitute Saints.

Later, on October 6, 1845, a body of the priesthood met in the Nauvoo Temple and solemnly signed their names to a written covenant to provide the means for taking the poor and the destitute with the body of the Saints in the great migration west. In 1846 the Council decided the trustees might even sell the temples in Nauvoo and Kirtland and all of the property of the Church to help the Saints move westward.<sup>13</sup>

The continuing duty of the priesthood of the Church today is to care for all members, including the poor and the needy, the widows, the orphans, the single mothers and their families. We have an additional duty in our time to increase our labors to love the spiritually poor among our brethren so that they and their families might enjoy "peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."<sup>14</sup>

### **Priesthood duties of young men**

You young men of the Aaronic Priesthood have only glimpsed the satisfaction that comes through the righteous exercise of your priesthood. This priesthood holds "the key of the ministering of angels."<sup>15</sup> Priests may be permitted to perform the sacred ordinance of baptism in order to have our sins removed. The Aaronic Priesthood administers and passes the sacred emblems of the sacrament. Both ordinances relate directly to the Savior's Atonement. In addition, as home teaching companions you are to help watch over the Church, urging members "to pray . . . and attend to all family duties."<sup>16</sup>

Another duty particularly pertains to you wonderful young men. That is the duty to follow the counsel of those in authority over you. Listen to your parents. Be obedient to them whether you agree with them or not. They love you more than anyone else and have your best interests at heart. Listen to your quorum president, your bishop, your stake president, the apostles, seers, and revelators and especially President Hinckley, as well as the other General Authorities of the Church. They will lead you into the ways of righteousness.

### **Be true to this great trust**

The priesthood of God has become the eminent power for good in the world. We are no longer a handful of people on the fringes of society. This great power for good has been entrusted to us; we must not weaken it by failing in our responsibilities. We must buckle on the armor of righteousness. We have the duty to be worthy in every respect so that we can invoke all of the great powers of the priesthood. We must be totally honest in all our dealings. We must be morally clean. We must help the poor and the needy. As the great army of God, we have the charge to foster the cause of truth and righteousness all over the world.

Brethren, we are the authorized servants of the risen Christ. With this authority comes the duty to move this holy work forward across the world. We are part of the greatest brotherhood in all the world. We will be held accountable for what we do with the keys, power, and authority granted to us. We must be true to this great trust in every way.

As we look to the future, we will continue to have obstacles, difficulties, challenges, and opposition. Satan has more tools at his disposal than ever before to deceive, distract, and corrupt our people. We will continue to be winnowed. One day in the future, we will have to account through President Gordon B. Hinckley to the Prophet Joseph for what we have done with this great power which the Lord has invested in us.

We are grateful that the work of God moves forward as powerfully as it does under the leadership of President Gordon B. Hinckley. After the death of the Savior, His Apostles did great and marvelous things in His name. Peter and John were asked by Caiaphas and other high priests, "By what power . . . have ye done this?"<sup>17</sup> Like Peter, we declare to the world that all this happens by and through the power of the holy priesthood and in the "name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."<sup>18</sup>

This is my solemn witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. George A. Faust diary, in author's possession, 1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 121:36.

3. *History of the Church*, 4:207.
4. *History of the Church*, 1:176.
5. Adapted from Hugh B. Brown, *Be What You Will to Be*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (14 Feb. 1967), 8–9.
6. B. H. Roberts, introduction to *History of the Church*, 3:xl.
7. "History of George Albert Smith" (typescript), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 17.
8. "History of George Albert Smith," 18.
9. "History of George Albert Smith," 33.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 104:18.
11. *History of the Church*, 3:251; see also 3:250, 252–55.
12. "To the Editor and Readers of the Lehi Post" (typescript, n.d.), Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3; spelling modernized.
13. See Brigham Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847*, comp. Elden J. Watson (1971), 145.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 59:23.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 84:26.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 20:51.
17. Acts 4:7.
18. Acts 4:10.

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The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

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#### President Hinckley

We shall now be pleased to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

### President Thomas S. Monson

It is a joy and a privilege for me to stand before you, such a vast audience of priesthood holders both seen and unseen. General Church priesthood meetings have always been a treat—from

Aaronic Priesthood days until the present. To "come, listen to a prophet's voice, and hear the word of God,"<sup>1</sup> as a song from our hymnbook states, is a cherished blessing.

### **A boy's love for President Hinckley**

We sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and as the prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church in our time. A letter which I received from a proud father tells of an experience with his then five-year-old son and the boy's love for the President of the Church and desire to emulate the President's example. The father wrote:

"When Christopher was five years old, he would get ready for church on Sundays mostly by himself. On one particular Sunday, he decided he wanted to wear a suit and tie, which to that point he had never done. He scoured the closet on his own for a hand-me-down tie and produced a rather used clip-on one that he didn't need to create a knot for. He attached the tie to his white shirt, then capped it off with the small navy jacket that had hung for years in the boys' closet.

"On his own, he went into the bathroom and painstakingly combed his blonde hair to perfection. About that time, I came into the bathroom to finish getting ready myself. I found Christopher beaming at himself in the mirror. Without taking his eyes off his reflection, he proclaimed proudly, 'Look, Papa—Christopher B. Hinckley!'" And Father realized that a boy had been watching the prophet of the Lord.

Our children are watching. They are absorbing eternal lessons. They are shaping their futures. What is the example we are presenting to them?

### **A son watches his father's example**

Years ago when our youngest son, Clark, was attending a religion class at Brigham Young University, the instructor, during a lecture, asked Clark, "What is an example of life with your father that you best remember?"

The instructor later wrote to me and told me of the reply which Clark had given to the class. Said Clark: "When I was a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood, my dad and I went pheasant hunting near Malad, Idaho. The day was Monday—the last day of the season. We walked through countless fields in search of pheasants but only saw a few, and these we missed. Dad then said to me, 'Clark, let's unload our guns, and we'll place them in this ditch. Then we'll kneel down to pray.' I thought Dad would pray for more pheasants, but I was wrong. He explained to me that Elder Richard L. Evans was gravely ill and that at 12 noon on that particular Monday the members of the Quorum of the Twelve—wherever they may be at the time—were to kneel and, in a way, together unite in a fervent prayer of faith for Elder Evans. Removing our caps, we knelt, we prayed."

I well remember the occasion, but I never dreamed a son was watching, was learning, was building his own testimony.

### **Guide and inspire young men**

In analyzing the statistical performance of those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood as deacons, teachers, and priests, we become concerned when significant numbers of deacons slip into inactivity and fail to be ordained teachers at the proper time. The same is true with some who are teachers but not ordained priests—and particularly priests who never receive the Melchizedek Priesthood. Brethren, this should never be. We have an awesome responsibility to guide and inspire these young men on the priesthood trail, that no avalanche of sin or error will deter their progress or sweep them away from their eternal goals.

Bishops and bishops' counselors, will you undertake a study of the activity levels of each Aaronic Priesthood young man and outline your own plan to en-

sure the progress and activity of each one?

One newly called bishop, in his first meeting with his counselors, declared, "The Aaronic Priesthood is a prime responsibility of ours." To the second counselor, he directed, "I ask you to be personally responsible to ensure that every deacon, at the appropriate age, be worthy and be ordained a teacher." To the other counselor, he said, "Will you please do the same as pertains to the teachers, that they may, on schedule, be worthy and be ordained priests." Then the bishop continued, "I will take the same responsibility for the priests to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and be ordained elders. Together, and with God's help, we can do it." And they did.

### **Reaching the mind and heart of a boy**

Our youth need less criticism and more models to follow. You advisers to the Aaronic Priesthood quorums are teachers and models for the young men. Do you know the gospel? Have you prepared the lesson? Do you know each boy and prayerfully determine how you might reach his mind, his heart, and help fashion his future?

Remember, it isn't sufficient to assume that when you teach, the boy is listening to what you say. Let me illustrate:

In what we call the west boardroom of the Church Administration Building, there hangs a lovely painting rendered by the artist Harry Anderson. The painting depicts Jesus sitting on a small stone wall with numerous children gathered around, knowing they are the object of His love. Each time I gaze at that painting, I think of the passage of scripture, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

On one occasion I had given a priesthood blessing in that room to a small lad who was soon to undergo major surgery.

I directed his attention and that of his parents to the painting of Jesus and the children. I then made a few remarks concerning the Savior and His never-failing love. I asked the boy if he had any questions. "Yes," he replied seriously. "Brother Monson, how does a boy go about getting a little goat and a leash for it like that one in the painting?"

For a moment I was stunned by the unanticipated question, a little deflated concerning my teaching ability, but then I responded: "Jesus gives to you and me gifts far more important than a goat on a leash. He provides a road map to heaven. His teachings, His example, His love are far greater gifts than that offered by the world."

"Come, follow me,"<sup>3</sup> He invited. And we are wise when we follow Him!

Let all young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood learn and live the Savior's teachings and prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood.

### **A bishopric member trains and inspires**

May I share with you brethren my personal experience as a teachers quorum president. The member of the bishopric who had responsibility for us invited the new presidency and secretary to come to his home for leadership training. He wanted our ideas concerning how we should go about our newly given duties. We obliged—on condition that he would invite his wife, Nettie, to serve us some of the meat pies for which she was famous. This he agreed to do. Brethren, isn't it remarkable how we men will obligate our wives to do things—often without notice? The resulting meeting was one of the best I have ever attended. We were taught to the level of our understanding and inspired to look after our quorum members.

After a delicious meat pie smothered with gravy, we asked the bishop's counselor and his wife to join in a game of

Monopoly®. I am certain they had other things to do, but they willingly complied with our request.

I don't remember who won the Monopoly game, but I have never forgotten the lessons learned that night in Church government and in the administration of a priesthood quorum.

### **Good advice: never lie**

During the fervor of the early years of World War II, one of our teachers quorum members, Fritz, wanted to defend our country but didn't want to wait until he reached the minimum age required to serve. He falsified his age and enlisted in the United States Navy. Soon he found himself far away in the Pacific sea battles. The vessel on which he served was sent to the bottom, with many hands lost. Fritz survived and later appeared in our quorum meeting in full uniform, with battle ribbons affixed. I remember asking Fritz, "Fritz, do you have any advice for us?" We were all on the very doorstep of mandatory military service.

Fritz thought for a moment and then said, "Never lie about your age or about anything else!" That one-sentence declaration is remembered yet.

### **Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood**

Young men between the ages of 12 and 17 are in a time of preparation and personal spiritual growth. Accordingly, the purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood are to help each person who is ordained:

1. To become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and live by its teachings.

2. To magnify priesthood callings and fulfill the responsibilities of his priesthood office.

3. To give meaningful service.

4. To prepare to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and temple ordinances.

5. To commit to, prepare for, and serve an honorable full-time mission.

6. To prepare to become a worthy husband and father.<sup>4</sup>

### **Missionaries answer the Lord's call**

Serving throughout the world is a great missionary force, going about doing good as did the Savior. Missionaries teach truth. They dispel darkness. They spread joy. They bring precious souls to Christ.

On that special day when a mission call is received, parents, brothers and sisters, and grandparents gather around the prospective missionary and note his nervousness as he carefully opens the letter of call. There is a pause, and then he announces where the prophet of the Lord has assigned him to serve. Feelings are very near to the surface. Tears come easily, and the family rejoices in the bond of love and the goodness of God.

The full-time missionaries and all others engaged in the work of the Lord have answered His call. We are on His errand. We shall succeed in the solemn charge given by Mormon to declare the Lord's word among the people. Wrote Mormon: "Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life."<sup>5</sup>

### **A missionary helps a German woman**

In 1926 President Fred Tadge, president of the German-Austrian Mission, called a mission conference to be held at Dresden, Germany, in August. The missionaries were to walk to this conference from their fields of labor basically "without purse or scrip," although they had to carry a small amount of money or they could be arrested as vagabonds.

Elder Alfred Lippold and his companion, Elder Parker Thomas, took the

north route. Somewhere along the way, the two called at a home where they met a woman and her eight children. She told the elders that her husband had left her and the children and that they were now without money. After she had let them in, the woman said: "If you travel without purse or scrip, then you must be hungry. Sit down." She gave each of them a big slice of bread with plum jam on it. The missionaries blessed the breakfast and in the blessing on the food asked the Lord to give the woman what she needed.

The missionaries then departed. After they had walked about a mile, Elder Thomas said, "I must go back," which he did without explanation.

On his return, Elder Lippold asked, "Why did you go back?"

Elder Thomas explained: "In our prayer we asked that the woman be given what she needed. I *had* what was needed—a \$20 bill. It was in my pocket, and I went back to give it to her. It would have burned a hole in my pocket."

### Service in Rarotonga

Thirty years ago I had responsibility for much of the work in the South Pacific. A Brother J. Vernon Monson was called, together with his wife, to journey to faraway Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, there to serve as district president. Later, in a letter to me, he reported:

"We are most grateful for the progress being made, and I would especially like to mention the goodwill and wonderful relations that have developed with the representatives of government and the business community toward us and the Church.

"One thing climaxed the development of this public acceptance," he wrote. "It was in having our nephew and niece, Dr. and Mrs. Odeen Manning, render an outstanding service here in the Cook Islands. Dr. Manning is an oph-

thalmologist, and I wrote to him outlining a proposal whereby he might render service to the people of Rarotonga. My proposal included the following: (1) no remuneration; (2) he must pay his own expenses; (3) that he turn his practice over to the other doctors to handle for the three months he would be away; (4) we would furnish them free board and room while in Rarotonga; and (5) that he bring his own surgical instruments, as none would be available in Rarotonga."

Brother Vernon Monson's letter to me continued:

"The Mannings airmailed their reply in two words: 'Offer accepted.' As preparations began, the government of the Cook Islands assigned competent doctors to assist Dr. Manning and to learn from him. In all, 284 patients were examined, with most being fitted for glasses. Fifty-three patients had serious eye operations, such as cataract surgery.

"The entire three-month program was wonderful and most heartwarming. Truly we were blessed. It has buoyed up the Saints, who gained new pride in being members of a faith which would bring medical service to these islands." The letter ended.

Years later, my wife and I were guests on a BYU-sponsored cruise to the Holy Land. One evening as we were seated on the ship's deck, the man sitting next to us turned to me and said, "Elder Monson, my name is Odeen Manning from Woodland Hills, California. I am an ophthalmologist by profession and served a brief medical mission to Rarotonga when my uncle and aunt were serving there."

I acknowledged that I was aware of his sacrifice and his service. I asked Dr. Manning, "As you reflect on this experience, would you wish to share with me your feelings concerning it?"

He responded with emotion, saying, "It was the most spiritually rewarding experience of my life."

I believe it was more than coincidence that my wife and I would be on the cruise vessel at that particular time and in that particular area of the deck, sitting next to a man we never before had met. Heaven was close as Dr. Manning and I embraced, and thanks were expressed for his service—not only to those who were blind and now could see, but also to our Lord and Savior. As Jacob declared, “Great are the promises of the Lord unto them who are upon the isles of the sea.”<sup>6</sup>

### Testimony of the Savior

Of Him who delivered each of us from endless death, even Jesus Christ, I testify that He is a teacher of truth—but He is more than a teacher. He is the Exemplar of the perfect life—but He is more than an exemplar. He is the Great Physician—but He is more than a physician. He who rescued the “lost battalion” of mankind is the literal Savior of the world, the Son of God, the Prince of Peace, the Holy One of Israel—even the risen Lord—who declared, “I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.”<sup>7</sup>

My dear brethren, let each of us:

- Learn of Him.
- Believe in Him.
- Trust in Him.
- Follow Him.
- Obey Him.

By so doing we can become like Him. Of this truth I solemnly bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. “Come, Listen to a Prophet’s Voice,” *Hymns*, no. 21.
2. Mark 10:14.
3. Luke 18:22.
4. See *Aaronic Priesthood Leadership Handbook* (1991), 6.
5. 3 Nephi 5:13.
6. 2 Nephi 10:21.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.

### President Hinckley

President Monson has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. in the morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow thereafter.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our gratitude to the Tabernacle Choir and the Mormon Youth Chorus—the men’s voices—for the beautiful music they have provided.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “The Lord Is My Shepherd.”

After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Ray H. Wood.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### To the young men

My brethren, it is a tremendous opportunity and an awesome responsibility to speak to you.

I wish to speak initially to the younger men who are here tonight. Thank you for

your presence, wherever you may be gathered. Thank you for attending seminary as well as your Sunday meetings. I honor you for your desire to learn of the gospel, to deepen your scholarship in studying the word of the Lord. I thank you for the desire you carry in your

hearts to serve missions. I thank you for your dreams of marrying in the temple and rearing honorable families of your own.

You are not "dead-end" kids. You are not wasting your lives in drifting aimlessly. You have purpose. You have design. You have plans that can only lead to growth and strength.

### **Pledge of young men in California**

When your energies are harnessed, when your dreams are focused, marvelous things happen. I recently received a proclamation from a group of LDS young men from the northern area of California. They are from 19 stakes, and as they gathered in the mountains, they visited the scene of a pioneer tragedy. As the boys pondered the things they saw and the reminders of their inheritance, they were invited to sign a Mormon Trail Scout Encampment Proclamation. I should like to read this pledge to you:

"Be it known to all that we are Boy Scouts . . . and bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood of God. We pledge our allegiance to the values and principles that guided the men of the Mormon Battalion and the Latter-day Saint pioneer men and women who helped establish this state of California. As their grateful sons, we rejoice in our heritage of service.

"On this eighteenth day of July 1998, we pledge to become converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We will study the scriptures. We will pray for strength to obey. We will work. We will strive with all our hearts to follow the example of Jesus.

"We will magnify the priesthood we have been given by serving other people. We will keep ourselves worthy to administer the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Wherever there is a need for help, like our forefathers, we will step forward.

"We will prove ourselves worthy of the greater, Melchizedek Priesthood. We commit ourselves to the Lord's army and will go forth as full-time missionaries to invite all to come unto Christ.

"We are young men of the covenant. We will prepare ourselves to receive the covenant of eternal marriage. We pray for righteous wives and children whom we will honor and protect with our own lives.

"Be it known that whatever the risks, whatever the temptations, whatever the state of the world around us, as our forefathers were faithful, so we will be. Like those who have gone before, we will turn away from self-aggrandizement and set aside personal gain in order to build a peaceful society, governed by God.

"At all times and in all places, we will be true to our pledge."

I compliment every boy who signed this pledge. I pray that not one will ever default on the promises he has made to himself, to the Church, and to the Lord.

What a different world this would be if every young man could and would sign such a statement of promise. There would be no lives wasted with drugs. There would be no gangs with children killing children and young men headed either for prison or death. Education would become a prize worth working for. Service in the Church would become an opportunity to be cherished. There would be greater peace and love in the homes of the people. There would be no viewing of pornography, no reading of sleazy literature. You would honor and respect the girls with whom you associate, and they would never have any fear about being alone with you in any set of circumstances. It would be as if the stripling warriors of Helaman had recruited the youth of the world to their way of living.

### Importance of missionary service

On the agenda of your lives, of course, would be a mission. You would gladly go wherever you might be sent to do the work of the Lord, giving it your full time and attention, your strength and energy and love.

Permit me to read to you parts of a letter from a young man now serving a mission. It is written to his family, and I hope I do not violate propriety in reading it to this great gathering. I will not disclose the name of the writer or the mission in which he serves. He says:

"This past year has been great! I transferred out of the mission office and came to this small branch. My life has changed dramatically since that last transfer. I have in the past few months learned what is really important. I have learned what matters. I have learned to forget myself. I have learned to work effectively. I have learned to love others. I have learned that God loves me and that I love Him. In short, I have learned to live what I believe. . . .

"I have learned about people and things. I have watched tears of joy come to those who never knew they were children of God. I have seen the prayers of the penitent be answered. I have seen people absorb the gospel of Jesus Christ and want to change into new persons, all because of a feeling. . . .

"I often dream about the plan of salvation. I think about the marvelous work and a wonder that has taken place. I think about the power and force of angels that stand among us. I wonder at times how many of these are around me helping to bear testimony in a language I never thought could be fully understood.

"I ponder upon the peaceable things of immortal glory visioned by Enoch. . . . I am thankful to God to be who I am. My greatest blessing in life is to be alive—alive in the service of our God. In this, I find great peace and joy."

Now, my dear young friends, I hope all of you are pointed in the direction of missionary service. I cannot promise you fun. I cannot promise you ease and comfort. I cannot promise you freedom from discouragement, from fear, from downright misery at times. But I can promise you that you will grow as you have never grown in a similar period during your entire lives. I can promise you a happiness that will be unique and wonderful and lasting. I can promise you that you will reevaluate your lives, that you will establish new priorities, that you will live closer to the Lord, that prayer will become a real and wonderful experience, that you will walk with faith in the outcome of the good things you do.

God bless you young men, the boys, of this, His great Church. May each of you walk with a higher resolve, a determination to be Latter-day Saints in every meaning of the word. May achievement, accomplishment, and service become your reward in the fascinating and wonderful life which lies ahead of you.

### To the older men

Now, brethren, I should like to talk to the older men, hoping that there will be some lesson for the younger men as well.

I wish to speak to you about temporal matters.

As a backdrop for what I wish to say, I read to you a few verses from the 41st chapter of Genesis.

Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, dreamed dreams which greatly troubled him. The wise men of his court could not give an interpretation. Joseph was then brought before him:

"Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

"And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fattished and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

"And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed. . . .

"And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: . . .

"And I saw in my dream . . . seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

"And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

"And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears. . . .

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, . . . God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

"The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. . . .

". . . What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

"And there shall arise after them seven years of famine. . . .

"... And God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:17-20, 22-26, 28-30, 32).

### **Get our houses in order**

Now, brethren, I want to make it very clear that I am not prophesying, that I am not predicting years of famine in the future. But I am suggesting that the time has come to get our houses in order.

So many of our people are living on the very edge of their incomes. In fact, some are living on borrowings.

We have witnessed in recent weeks wide and fearsome swings in the markets of the world. The economy is a fragile thing. A stumble in the economy in Jakarta or Moscow can immediately affect the entire world. It can eventually reach down to each of us as individuals. There is a portent of stormy weather ahead to which we had better give heed.

I hope with all my heart that we shall never slip into a depression. I am a child of the Great Depression of the thirties. I finished the university in 1932, when unemployment in this area exceeded 33 percent.

My father was then president of the largest stake in the Church in this valley. It was before our present welfare program was established. He walked the floor worrying about his people. He and his associates established a great wood-chopping project designed to keep the home furnaces and stoves going and the people warm in the winter. They had no money with which to buy coal. Men who had been affluent were among those who chopped wood.

### **Warning against consumer debt**

I repeat, I hope we will never again see such a depression. But I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. In March 1997 that debt totaled \$1.2 trillion, which represented a 7 percent increase over the previous year.

In December of 1997, 55 to 60 million households in the United States carried credit card balances. These balances averaged more than \$7,000 and cost \$1,000 per year in interest and fees. Consumer debt as a percentage of disposable income rose from 16.3 percent in 1993 to 19.3 percent in 1996.

Everyone knows that every dollar borrowed carries with it the penalty of paying interest. When money cannot be repaid, then bankruptcy follows. There were 1,350,118 bankruptcies in the United States last year. This represented a 50 percent increase from 1992. In the second quarter of this year, nearly 362,000 persons filed for bankruptcy, a record number for a three-month period.

We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing in-

vation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one's home. But no mention is made of interest.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in the April 1938 general conference, said from this pulpit, "Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1938, 103).

### **Live within your means**

I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years.

No one knows when emergencies will strike. I am somewhat familiar with the case of a man who was highly successful in his profession. He lived in comfort. He built a large home. Then one day he was suddenly involved in a serious accident. Instantly, without warning, he almost lost his life. He was left a cripple. Destroyed was his earning power. He faced huge medical bills. He had other payments to make. He was helpless before his creditors. One moment he was rich; the next he was broke.

Since the beginnings of the Church, the Lord has spoken on this matter of debt. To Martin Harris through revelation He said: "Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (D&C 19:35).

President Heber J. Grant spoke repeatedly on this matter from this pulpit. He said:

"If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any

one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet" (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

### **Become self-reliant**

We are carrying a message of self-reliance throughout the Church. Self-reliance cannot obtain when there is serious debt hanging over a household. One has neither independence nor freedom from bondage when he is obligated to others.

In managing the affairs of the Church, we have tried to set an example. We have, as a matter of policy, stringently followed the practice of setting aside each year a percentage of the income of the Church against a possible day of need.

I am grateful to be able to say that the Church in all its operations, in all its undertakings, in all of its departments, is able to function without borrowed money. If we cannot get along, we will curtail our programs. We will shrink expenditures to fit the income. We will not borrow.

One of the happiest days in the life of President Joseph F. Smith was the day the Church paid off its long-standing indebtedness.

What a wonderful feeling it is to be free of debt, to have a little money against a day of emergency put away where it can be retrieved when necessary.

President Faust would not tell you this himself. Perhaps I can tell it, and he can take it out on me afterward. He had a mortgage on his home drawing 4 percent interest. Many people would have told him he was foolish to pay off that mortgage when it carried so low a rate of interest. But the first opportunity he had to acquire some means, he and his wife determined they would pay off their mortgage. He has been free of debt since

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Morning Session

that day. That's why he wears a smile on his face, and that's why he whistles while he works.

### **Free yourselves from bondage of debt**

I urge you, brethren, to look to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt to the extent possible. Pay off debt as quickly as you can, and free yourselves from bondage.

This is a part of the temporal gospel in which we believe. May the Lord bless you, my beloved brethren, to set your houses in order. If you have paid your

debts, if you have a reserve, even though it be small, then should storms howl about your head, you will have shelter for your wives and children and peace in your hearts. That's all I have to say about it, but I wish to say it with all the emphasis of which I am capable.

I leave with you my testimony of the divinity of this work and my love for each of you, in the name of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

Elder Ray H. Wood offered the benediction.

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## **SUNDAY MORNING SESSION**

The fourth general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 10:00 A.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1998. President Gordon B. Hinckley conducted this session.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Craig Jessop conducting and Clay Christiansen at the organ.

To begin the session, the choir sang "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah." President Hinckley then made the following remarks.

### **President Gordon B. Hinckley**

My beloved brethren and sisters, we welcome you to the fourth general session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

We extend our greetings to all who are participating by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission. We are grateful to the owners and operators of these various facilities who are broadcasting this conference.

We acknowledge the presence this morning of government, education, and civic leaders, and members of the Church who have assembled to worship together.

The music for this session will be by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Craig Jessop, with Clay Christiansen at the organ.

The choir opened this session by singing "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" and now will favor us with "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise." Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise."

Elder Quentin L. Cook offered the invocation.

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### **President Hinckley**

We will now be pleased to hear from President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

## President James E. Faust

### Grandfather's faith in paying tithing

It is always an overpowering responsibility to come to this pulpit. I do so in humility. I pray that you may understand by the Spirit all that I have to say.

I wish to speak about opening the windows of heaven. As a boy I learned a great lesson of faith and sacrifice as I worked on my grandfather's farm during the terrible economic depression of the 1930s. The taxes on the farm were delinquent, and Grandfather, like so many, had no money. There was a drought in the land, and some cows and horses were dying for lack of grass and hay. One day when we were harvesting what little hay there was in the field, Grandfather told us to take the wagon to the corner of the field where the best stand of hay stood and fill the wagon as full as we could and take it to the tithing yard as payment of his tithing in kind.

I wondered how Grandfather could use the hay to pay tithing when some of the cows that we were depending upon to sustain us might starve. I even questioned if the Lord expected that much sacrifice from him. Ultimately, I marveled at his great faith that somehow the Lord would provide. The legacy of faith he passed on to his posterity was far greater than money, because he established in the minds of his children and grandchildren that above all, he loved the Lord and His holy work over other earthly things. He never became wealthy, but he died at peace with the Lord and with himself.

I was taught more about the spirit of tithing by President Henry D. Moyle, who lived in my ward when I was serving as a young bishop. One tithing settlement, President Moyle came in and declared, "Bishop, this is a full tithe and a little bit more, because that's the way we have been blessed."

### A key to opening the windows of heaven

Tithing is a principle that is fundamental to the personal happiness and well-being of the Church members worldwide, both rich and poor. Tithing is a principle of sacrifice and a key to the opening of the windows of heaven. In Primary I memorized the tithing poem: "What is tithing? I will tell you every time. Ten cents from a dollar, and a penny from a dime." But I did not understand it fully until it was taught by Grandfather and President Henry D. Moyle.

The law of tithing is simple: we pay one-tenth of our individual increase annually.<sup>1</sup> Increase has been interpreted by the First Presidency to mean income.<sup>2</sup> What amounts to 10 percent of our individual income is between each of us and our Maker. There are no legalistic rules. As a convert in Korea once said: "With tithing, it doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor. You pay 10 percent, and you don't have to be ashamed if you haven't earned very much. If you make lots of money, you pay 10 percent. If you make very little, you still pay 10 percent. Heavenly Father will love you for it. You can hold your head up proud."<sup>3</sup>

Why should members worldwide, many of whom may not have enough for their daily needs, be encouraged to keep the Lord's law of tithing? As President Hinkley said in Cebu in the Philippine Islands, if members, "even living in poverty and misery, . . . will accept the gospel and live it, pay their tithes and offerings, even though those be meager, . . . they will have rice in their bowls and clothing on their backs and shelter over their heads. I do not see any other solution."<sup>4</sup>

### **Paying tithing brings true prosperity**

Some may feel that they cannot afford to pay tithing, but the Lord has promised that He would prepare a way for us to keep all of His commandments.<sup>5</sup> To pay tithing takes a leap of faith in the beginning, but as Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."<sup>6</sup> We learn about tithing by paying it. Indeed, I believe it is possible to break out of poverty by having the faith to give back to the Lord part of what little we have.

Members of the Church who do not tithe do not lose their membership; they only lose blessings. Through Malachi the Lord asks: "Will a man rob God? . . . But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."<sup>7</sup> If we will trust in the Lord, He will open the windows of heaven to us as we give back to Him the one-tenth He asks of us. His promise is sure: "I will . . . pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."<sup>8</sup> Although tithing carries with it both temporal and spiritual blessings, the only absolute promise to the faithful is, "Ye shall have the riches of eternity."<sup>9</sup>

President Heber J. Grant put it in context when he said: "Prosperity comes to those who observe the law of tithing. When I say prosperity I am not thinking of it in terms of dollars and cents alone. . . . What I count as real prosperity . . . is the growth in a knowledge of God, and in a testimony, and in the power to live the gospel and to inspire our families to do the same. That is prosperity of the truest kind."<sup>10</sup>

Sister Yaeko Seki experienced part of this precious promise. She writes:

"My family and I were spending a day at the Japan Alps National Park. . . . I was pregnant with our fourth child and was feeling rather tired, so I lay down under the trees. . . . I began thinking about our financial problems. My

heart became overwhelmed, and I burst into tears. 'Lord, we are full-tithe payers. We have sacrificed so much. When will the windows of heaven open unto us and our burdens be lightened?'

"I prayed with all my heart. Then I turned to watch my husband and children playing and laughing together. . . . Suddenly, the Spirit testified to me that my blessings were abundant and that my family was the greatest blessing Heavenly Father could give me."<sup>11</sup>

Many of us have had the windows of heaven open up for us, so we do not look upon tithing as a sacrifice but rather a blessing and even a privilege.

### **Blessings of tithing settlement**

One of the great blessings the people of this Church have is to meet with the bishop once each year, settle their tithing, and report that what they have paid in contributions constitutes a tithe. It is also a great blessing for the bishops to have this experience. I remember a man in our ward who had a large family who would bring all of his children with him when he came to tithing settlement. Starting with the youngest, he would ask each one to report to the bishop as to whether their contributions constituted a tithe. When all of the children had reported, he would report for his wife and his family. This family was abundantly blessed for their faithfulness.

### **Administering tithing funds**

Rest assured that the tithes of this Church are administered as set forth in the revelation given in 1838 to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The 18 Church leaders designated in the 120th section of the Doctrine and Covenants meet together to administer these sacred funds. Those of us who sit on that council know that this sacred responsibility is done in accordance with the Lord's "voice unto them."<sup>12</sup>

## **Tithing and temples**

President Hinckley has announced the building of more temples than there ever have been at any time in history. The need for temples all over the world is great. This is because they are spiritual sanctuaries. Those who attend the temples can find protection against Satan and his desire to destroy them and their families. To Church members in isolated communities of the Church who want to have a temple in their midst, I would suggest that you first show your faith by paying your tithing so that you are worthy to receive temple blessings. As the Lord revealed to the elders of the Church in Kirtland, "Now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people."<sup>13</sup>

## **Other offerings**

The Lord speaks of offerings in the plural. He expects us, as a condition of faithfulness, to pay our tithing and our fast offerings to help the poor and the needy. But we are privileged to make other offerings, not by way of assignment, assessment, or ecclesiastical direction. Among these are donations to the General Missionary Fund, Humanitarian Aid Fund, and the Book of Mormon Fund. We are also privileged to voluntarily contribute to building the new temples President Hinckley has announced.

Recently I received an anonymous letter from a person who made a substantial sacrifice for the General Temple Fund of the Church. She said: "I decided when I wanted to spend any money on myself I would forgo it and put the money into the temple fund. This meant no new clothes or shoes, books, hair appointments, necklaces, or anything of a personal nature until I reached my goal. I thought this would be a sacrifice, but

instead I have found joy in it. It has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience."

## **Sacrifice is necessary to develop faith**

The Prophet Joseph Smith once said, "A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation." He continues, "Those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith."<sup>14</sup>

Our donations are made holy by our faith. Recently I attended sacrament meeting in my own ward. Before the meeting began, a few people handed contribution envelopes to the members of the bishopric. They came with a smile and a happy countenance. These envelopes contained their tithes and other offerings which they were joyfully paying as a humble expression of their gratitude for the Lord's blessings. This was a testament of their faith.

The work of God is moving forward in many parts of the world like it never has before, particularly in countries where the economic standards are not high and new members are still learning the principle of faith and how it relates to blessings. To be faithful members of this Church requires sacrifice and consecration. It means that worldly pleasures and earthly possessions should not be our principal aim in life, because the gift of eternal life requires a willingness to sacrifice all we have and are in order to obtain it.

## **Sacrifice brings protection from evil**

In Old Testament times the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, and many people died. He commanded David to offer a sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David went

to see Araunah, and Araunah found out why he had come, he generously offered to give him whatever was needed for the sacrifice. David's response was profound: "I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."<sup>15</sup> He bought the threshing floor, offered the sacrifice, and the plague ceased.

In our time we are surfeited with a pestilence of violence, evil, and wickedness in so many forms. Those who keep their covenants and pay their tithes and offerings will have some extra defense against these virulent modern-day forms of evil. But this protection will not come with a sacrifice which costs us nothing.

I say this because the world's religious drift is obvious. If something can be had cheaply, without exertion or sacrifice, people do not mind having a little bit of it. In contrast, the blessings of membership in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints require both exertion and sacrifice. Receiving the blessings requires the payment of tithes and offerings. Ours is not a Sunday-only religion. It demands exemplary conduct and effort every day of the week. It involves accepting calls and serving with fidelity in those callings. It means strength of character, integrity, and honesty to the Lord and our fellowmen. It means that our homes need to be places of sanctuary and love. It means a relentless battle against the bombardment of worldly evils. It means, at times, being unpopular and politically incorrect.

### The Savior's ultimate offering

I feel honored and privileged to have a small part in this holy work. It is a great time of vast spiritual outreach all over the world. It is marvelous to behold. It is the work of God. It is directed by the head of this Church, who is our Lord and

Savior, Jesus the Christ. President Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet, seer, and revelator. I believe President Hinckley's inspired leadership blesses all mankind.

The ultimate offering was that offered by the Savior Himself in giving His very life. It causes each of us to wonder, *How many drops of blood were shed for me?* I witness that Jesus is the Christ, the holy Son of God, the healer of our souls, our Savior and Redeemer of mankind. Of this I testify in His holy name, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 119:4.
2. See *General Handbook of Instructions* (1989), sec. 9, p. 1.
3. Letter from D. Brent Clement, president of the Korea Seoul Mission, 1981.
4. "Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 7.
5. See 1 Nephi 3:7.
6. John 7:17.
7. Malachi 3:8.
8. Malachi 3:10.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 38:39.
10. *Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham (1941), 58.
11. "The Windows of Heaven," *Tambuli*, Mar. 1992, 17.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 120.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 64:23.
14. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 69, 70.
15. 2 Samuel 24:24; see verses 15–25.

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The choir sang "This Is the Christ."

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### President Hinckley

President James E. Faust has just spoken to us, following which the choir sang "This Is the Christ."

Our next speaker will be Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder David E. Sorensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

## Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Brothers and sisters, I am very grateful to be with you today. My pate is still somewhat shiny, but not because my barber friends have magnified their calling. Rather, it reflects more treatments, which are encouraging in spite of my alternating conference hairstyles.

My gratitude continues to flow—foremost to the Lord, then to my special wife and family, competent and caring doctors and nurses, and so many friends and members who pray in my behalf.

### The need for ultimate hope

For a variety of reasons, brothers and sisters, today's society seems to struggle in order to be *hopeful*. The associated causes and effects come in ever so subtly.

Our everyday usage of the word *hope* includes how we “hope” to arrive at a certain destination by a certain time. We “hope” the world economy will improve. We “hope” for the visit of a loved one. Such typify our sincere but proximate hopes.

Life's disappointments often represent the debris of our failed proximate hopes. Instead, however, I speak of the crucial need for ultimate hope.

Ultimate hope is a different matter. It is tied to Jesus and the blessings of the great Atonement, blessings resulting in the universal Resurrection and the precious opportunity provided thereby for us to practice emancipating repentance, making possible what the scriptures call “a perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20).

Moroni confirmed: “What is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:40–41; see also Alma 27:28). Real hope, therefore, is not associated with things mercurial, but rather with things immortal and eternal!

### Hope, faith, charity, and patience

Unsurprisingly, hope is intertwined with other gospel doctrines, especially faith and patience.

Just as doubt, despair, and desensitization go together, so do faith, hope, charity, and patience. The latter qualities must be carefully and constantly nurtured, however, whereas doubt and despair, like dandelions, need little encouragement in order to sprout and spread. Alas, despair comes so naturally to the natural man!

Patience, for example, permits us to deal more evenly with the unevenness of life's experiences.

Faith and hope are constantly interactive and are not always easily or precisely distinguished. Nevertheless, ultimate hope's expectations are “with surety” true (Ether 12:4; see also Romans 8:24; Hebrews 11:1; Alma 32:21). Yet in the geometry of the restored theology, hope corresponds to faith but sometimes has a greater circumference. Faith, in turn, constitutes “the assurance of things hoped for” and the proof of “things not seen” (Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1; see also Ether 12:6). Thus hope sometimes reconnoiters beyond the present boundaries of faith, but it always radiates from Jesus.

No wonder souls can be stirred and rallied by real hope's “reveille” as by no other music. Even if a few comrades slumber or desert, “lively hope” is still there “smiling brightly before us” (1 Peter 1:3; “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet,” *Hymns*, no. 19). Hope caused downcast disciples to go quickly and expectantly to an empty garden tomb (see Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:8–12). Hope helped a prophet to see rescuing rain in a distant cloud which appeared to be no larger than a man's hand (see 1 Kings 18:41–46).

## The anchor of the soul

Such ultimate hope constitutes the "anchor of the soul" and is retained through the gift of the Holy Ghost and faith in Christ (Hebrews 6:19; see also Alma 25:16; Ether 12:9). In contrast, viewing life without the prospect of immortality can diminish not only hope but also the sense of personal accountability (see 1 Corinthians 15:19; Alma 30:18).

Granted, the human scene includes many individuals who go decently about life's labors, untouched by or unexpressive of deep religious feelings, but who, nevertheless, draw unknowingly upon "the light of Christ," which to a degree lights every individual (see D&C 84:46; Moroni 7:16, 18; John 1:9). Commendably, other individuals have openly acknowledged spiritual intimations which sustain them.

## Increasing despair and cynicism

Nevertheless, because proximate hopes are so vulnerable to irony and the unexpected, there is an increasing and profound sense of existential despair in the world. A grumpy cynicism now pervades politics. Many feel burdened by society's other accumulating anxieties.

Even those who are spiritually secure themselves can sense the chill in the air. Cold secularism causes some of that shivering, as many have given in to what Senator Patrick Moynihan called "defining deviancy down" ("Defining Deviancy Down," *The American Scholar*, winter 1993, 17). Much despair truly comes of iniquity—but as *God* defines iniquity (see Moroni 10:22).

There is so much unsettlement and divisiveness. No wonder the subsequent loss of hope almost inevitably sends selfishness surging as many, resignedly, turn to pleasing themselves.

When hope is stripped away, Paul noted this tendency for some to eat and drink, reasoning that "for to morrow we

die," driven by the erroneous conclusion that "when a man [is] dead, that [is] the end thereof" (1 Corinthians 15:32; Alma 30:18).

## Difficulties stir some people to repent

Much as I lament the gathering storms, there will be some usefulness in them. Events will help to draw fresh attention to God's higher ways and His kingdom, which is to "become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon" (D&C 105:31).

Individuals and nations will continue to choose what they want, but they cannot alter the ultimate consequences of what they want.

Therefore, in this hastened ripening process, let us not be surprised that the tares are looking more like tares all the time. During this time when nations are in distress, with perplexity, there will actually be some redemptive turbulence: "For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance" (2 Nephi 28:19).

Being so "stirred up" will be a real thing, though we can only speculate as to how it will be achieved.

Meanwhile, those with ultimate hope accept the truth of this terse verse: "But all things must come to pass in their time" (D&C 64:32).

It is well, therefore, to ponder the status of hope in our present human context when God's commandments seem unimportant to many. Granted, as the scriptures say, "it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right" (Mosiah 29:26). But if this does occur, bringing massive sea changes in society's attitudes, then the judgments of God will come (see Mosiah 29:26–27). Only the acceptance of the revelations of God can bring both the direction and correction needed and, in turn, a "brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20).

### Qualities of real hope

Real hope keeps us “anxiously engaged” in good causes even when these appear to be losing causes on the mortal scoreboard (see D&C 58:27). Likewise, real hope is much more than wishful musing. It stiffens, not slackens, the spiritual spine. Hope is serene, not giddy, eager without being naive, and pleasantly steady without being smug. Hope is realistic anticipation which takes the form of a determination—not only to survive adversity but, moreover, to “endure . . . well” to the end (D&C 121:8).

Though otherwise a “lively” attribute, hope stands quietly with us at funerals. Our tears are just as wet, but not because of despair. Rather, they are tears of heightened appreciation evoked by poignant separation. Those tears of separation change, ere long, becoming tears of glorious anticipation.

Real hope inspires quiet Christian service, not flashy public fanaticism. Finley Peter Dunne impishly observed, “A fanatic is a man who does what he thinks the Lord would do if He knew the facts” (quoted in Robert Byrne, comp., *The Third—and Possibly the Best—637 Best Things Anybody Ever Said* [1986], no. 549).

Indeed, when we are unduly impatient with an omniscient God’s timing, we really are suggesting that we know what is best. Strange, isn’t it—we who wear wristwatches seek to counsel Him who oversees cosmic clocks and calendars.

Because God wants us to come home after having become more like Him and His Son, part of this developmental process, of necessity, consists of showing unto us our weaknesses. Hence, if we have ultimate hope we will be submissive because, with His help, those weaknesses can even become strengths (see Ether 12:27).

It is not an easy thing, however, to be shown one’s weaknesses, as these are

regularly demonstrated by life’s circumstances. Nevertheless, this is part of coming unto Christ, and it is a vital, if painful, part of God’s plan of happiness. Besides, as Elder Henry B. Eyring has wisely observed, “If you want praise more than instruction, you may get neither” (“To Choose and Keep a Mentor,” *Addresses Delivered at the 1993 Annual University Conference, Brigham Young University* [1993], 42).

### Responses of the truly hopeful

By pressing forward hopefully, we can, repeatedly and joyfully, stand on what was yesterday’s distant horizon, thereby drawing even further hope from our very own experiences. Hence Paul described how “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3–4). Therefore, we rightly sing of God, “We’ve proved him in days that are past” (*Hymns*, no. 19).

Granted, those with true hope still see their personal circumstances shaken at times—like a kaleidoscope. Yet with the “eye of faith,” even in their changed, proximate circumstances, they still see divine design (Alma 5:15).

The truly hopeful, for instance, work amid surrounding decay at having strong and happy families. Their response is the steady, Joshua response: “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

We may not be able to fix the whole world, but we can strive to fix what may be amiss in our own families. Tolkien reminds us: “It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule” (*The Return of the King* [New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965], 155).

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in our own little family plots, we can bequeath to the succeeding generations "clean earth to till"! Thus not only does charity begin at home, but so does hope!

Whatever our particular furrow, we can, in Paul's words, "plow in hope," not looking back, and refusing to let yesterday hold tomorrow hostage (1 Corinthians 9:10).

Genuine, ultimate hope helps us to be more loving even while the love of many waxes cold (see Matthew 24:12). We are to be more holy, even as the world ripens in iniquity; to be more courteous and patient in a coarsening and curt world; and to be of strong hearts even when the hearts of others fail them (see Moroni 10:22).

### Reach out with hope

Hope can be contagious, especially if we are to be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh . . . a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15). Said President Brigham Young, if we do not impart knowledge to others and do good, we "will become contracted in [our] views and feelings" (*Deseret News*, 9 May 1855, 68).

If we look for specific things we can do, the Holy Ghost will direct us, showing unto us "all things" which we should do, for this is one of His inspiring roles

(2 Nephi 32:5). Our opportunities for helping others who have lost hope may be no further away than in our own extended families, a discouraged neighbor next door, or someone just around the corner. By helping a child learn to read, visiting a lonely patient in a nursing home, or simply running an errand for a busy but overwhelmed parent, so much can be imparted to others. Likewise, a simple gospel conversation can impart hope. Meanwhile, never mind that the world will become more bipolar as between those who are secular and permissive and those who hold to spiritual values.

Therefore, being blessed with hope ourselves, let us, as disciples, rather than being contracted, reach out, including to those who, for whatever reason, have "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23).

As in Charles Wesley's words in the hymn "Come, Let Us Anew," our lives and times do glide swiftly away, and our glide paths vary widely, as we all know. But all those who prevail "by the patience of hope and the labor of love" will hear the glorious words "Well and faithfully done; Enter into my joy and sit down on my throne" (*Hymns*, no. 217).

May this glorious moment one day be ours to claim, through the gospel of hope—in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder David E. Sorensen

Elder Maxwell, you are a great treasure to the Church and a blessing to the world at large. May God bless you and keep you.

Brothers and sisters, it is a daunting experience to stand before you. When I was growing up, my family lived on a cattle ranch in south-central Utah, and I spent a lot of time in a saddle rounding up and caring for the cattle. I must confess there is a part of me right now that

would be more comfortable dodging a charging bull than speaking here today. However, I know I am among friends, and I believe with all my heart in the importance of the work we are doing.

### This Church will fill the world

In the early days of the Church when there were just a few members, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to a group of

men: "You know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handfull of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world" (quoted by Wilford Woodruff, in Conference Report, Apr. 1898, 57). We are beginning to see a partial fulfillment of that prophecy.

### Hastening of temple building

As Church membership has grown around the world, so has the need for temples. President Hinckley said 13 years ago, "The sacred and important work that goes on in temples must be accelerated, and for this to happen, it is necessary that temples be taken closer to the people rather than having the people travel so far to temples" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1985, 71; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 54).

Let me share with you some numbers that show how far the Church has come in the effort to bring temples closer to the people:

In the year 1900, there were just four operating temples—all of them in the state of Utah.

In the next 50 years, from 1900 to 1950, four more temples were dedicated, for a total of eight. So in the first century, the Church built about one temple per decade.

In the 30 years between 1951 and 1980, another 11 temples were built, bringing the total to 19. This was a faster rate, but even still there were many members for whom a visit to a temple meant years of saving money and a long journey.

In the 1980s, the Church began a more intensive temple building effort; by 1997, 32 more temples had been dedicated, or about two per year.

The Church has now entered the most committed era of temple building in its history. In 1998, two temples have been dedicated, with 15 more under construction and an additional 26 temple sites being prepared for groundbreaking. These 43 temples, plus those currently operating, bring the total to 94.

This is an extraordinary blessing for us as members of the Church. The Old Testament describes some of the joy that comes from people building these holy places:

"And they sang together . . . in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord. . . . And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (Ezra 3:11; see also verses 10, 12–13).

Watching these new temples being built, I believe that we too will have occasion to praise the Lord and weep for joy.

### Temples help us come to Christ

As we see the increased commitment President Hinckley and others have made to building new temples, we might pause and ask ourselves why temples are of such importance. Indeed, nonmembers of the Church may not even understand the distinction between our regular meetinghouses, of which there are many thousands, and these very special buildings we call temples.

President Hinckley explained the distinction this way: "These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53). In other words, temples are of great value to us because they help us express our core theology, that of coming to Christ.

## Temples remind us of Christ

Temples do this in at least two ways. First, they symbolically and literally remind us and teach us about Christ and His Father. We know that Christ spent key parts of His ministry at the temple in Jerusalem (see John 7-8; Matthew 21-23; Mark 11-12; Luke 20) and drew frequently on temple symbolism in His teachings, often comparing Himself to symbols used in the temple, such as light and water (see, for example, John 7:38; 8:12). Our temple worship today includes many symbolic references to Christ, from the spires on the outside that point our minds heavenward, to the white clothing we wear inside the temple to symbolize that, as the book of Revelation says, we have come "out of great tribulation, and have washed [our] robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

Temples stand as a constant physical reminder of the grace and the goodness of the Father. This helps communities of Saints strengthen themselves. President George Q. Cannon said, "Every foundation stone that is laid for a temple, and every temple completed . . . lessens the power of Satan on the earth, and increases the power of God and Godliness" (Logan Temple cornerstone ceremony, 19 Sept. 1877; quoted in Nolan Porter Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* [1978], 34).

Temples have always symbolized being in the presence of the Lord. "Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them," said the Lord. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" (Exodus 25:8, 22). There is a closeness to God that comes through consistent worship in the house of the Lord. We can come to know Him and feel welcome, "at home," in His house.

With temples in so many places around the world, more of us will have them nearby to remind us of Christ and

His sacrifice for us. The simple presence of a temple should serve as a reminder of covenants we have made, the need for integrity, and the fact that God is never far away.

## Ordinances are centered in Christ

Beyond their physical presence and outward symbolism, temples can inspire us to come unto Christ in a second way—that is, by the ordinances we perform in them. All temple ordinances are centered in Jesus Christ and His divine mission, and they are performed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Doctrine and Covenants 84 says, "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:21). Each ordinance is calculated to reveal to us something about Christ and our relationship to God.

While some ordinances in the temple seem easy to understand, such as eternal marriage, others require careful and lengthy spiritual preparation before their full impact becomes clear to us. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the need to have the Spirit of God with us in order to understand the things of God: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12; see also verses 11, 14). As the Spirit of God helps us understand and know His plan for us, we will find not only greater knowledge but also a greater measure of peace and compassion.

Temple ordinances also provide an opportunity to strengthen our families, something so much needed today. Strength can be provided through performing ordinances vicariously for our ancestors, thus forming a "welding link" between parents and children (D&C 128:18). For example, in the temple we

can be baptized vicariously for our ancestors who may not have had a chance to hear the gospel during their mortal lives (see 1 Corinthians 15:29).

In Japan I witnessed a 21-year-old man accept the gospel. After baptism, he was the only member of the Church in his family. He completed the family history work for his deceased grandfather so he could perform ordinance work vicariously for him, literally doing something for his grandfather that his grandfather could no longer do for himself. As this young man came up out of the baptismal font, he had tears in his eyes. He said, "Now I know and feel, I have a witness, that I am not the only member of this Church in my family." These ordinances strengthened his relationship with his family and brought a new closeness into his life.

### **The gates of heaven are open**

At the dedication of the Manti Temple, Elder Lorenzo Snow prayed, "May this holy Temple be to them as one of the gates of heaven, opening into the straight and narrow path that leads to endless

lives and eternal dominion" (quoted in N. B. Lundwall, comp., *Temples of the Most High* [1941], 111).

Brothers and sisters, the gates of heaven are open to us, and the Lord Jesus Christ is inviting us to come unto Him, I humbly testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "My Redeemer Lives."

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### **President Hinckley**

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Twelve and Elder David E. Sorensen of the Seventy have just spoken to us. The choir then sang "My Redeemer Lives."

The choir and congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation." Following the singing, Sister Susan L. Warner, second counselor in the Primary general presidency, will address us.

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The choir and congregation sang "How Firm a Foundation."

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## **Sister Susan L. Warner**

### **All things bear record of Him**

Because our Heavenly Father wants us to know Him and to feel His love, He planned a world filled with magnificent creations that bear record of Him and His Son, Jesus Christ. Have you ever counted all the things that bear record of the Savior? There are sunsets and seashells, lilacs and lakes, insects and animals, miraculous mornings and star-strewn skies.

The Lord Himself told Adam, "All things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are tempo-

ral, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: *all things bear record of me*" (Moses 6:63; italics added).

Wherever we live in this world, we see the glorious rising sun, which bears record of the Light of Christ that fills our hearts and enlightens our minds. The mighty rivers and the meandering streams bear record that the Savior is the source of the living water that can quench our thirst for spiritual things.

The lilies of the field and even the smallest sparrow bear record of His generous and personal care.

### **We should bear record of Him**

But of all God's remarkable creations, only we, His children, are created in His image and likeness. Only we, His children, have the capacity to develop our own spiritual convictions. And only we, His children, can give voice and expression to our witness of Him. We, His children, rejoice in our privilege and sacred obligation to bear record of Him and His gospel.

Not long ago our granddaughter Susie received a copy of the scriptures. She lives in an area where her classmates and teacher are not members of the Church, so she wanted to share with them the Articles of Faith that were recorded in her new scriptures. She decided it would be appropriate to do this at school during the time that was scheduled for sharing something newsworthy. When the time came, eight-year-old Susie stood before her classmates and began, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). She continued, but when she got to the seventh article of faith, one classmate loudly complained, "This isn't a current event!" The teacher quickly responded, "Well, it's news to me!"

Each of us can share the good news of the gospel and give words to our convictions. If we are sensitive to the whisperings of the Spirit, we can find opportunities to humbly express our beliefs. Even a shy eight-year-old child felt the desire to share the articles of her faith.

### **The Spirit will bear witness as we testify**

When we bear record of the good news of the gospel, our spoken testi-

mony invites the Holy Ghost to bear His witness of the truth of the message. It is not our words that carry the power but rather the Spirit of God that accompanies our words and confirms them in the hearts of the listeners. Nephi explained in the Book of Mormon, "For when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1).

When we declare where we stand and humbly give words to what we believe and feel, the Spirit also bears witness to our own souls that what we speak is true. Elder Boyd K. Packer said it simply, "A testimony is to be *found* in the bearing of it!" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54).

### **Bear record to children**

In a society of unstable values and confusing voices, testimony can be the means by which parents give children an anchor for their faith. We do this in our families by bearing record of Jesus Christ and His gospel with our actions and our words. We do this when we pray together, study the scriptures, and hold regular family home evenings. Around the dinner table, parents and children can share what they are learning in Church meetings and activities and their everyday experiences applying gospel principles. Within this sacred family circle, children can learn to express feelings of love and gratitude for Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and for the blessings that come to us as we live together in families on this beautiful earth.

Children have their own spiritual sensitivities, and they make their own observations of Heavenly Father's creations. They are naturally interested in the worm that slithers in the rain puddle, enchanted by the sound of the ocean heard in a seashell, spellbound by the magical

pattern of clouds moving across the sky. It is a delightful privilege for any of us to take the hand of a child and accompany him as he discovers this beautiful world, but it is an even greater and more sacred privilege to help a child know the Creator of this world and to bear record of the love that He has for every one of His children.

When we share our feelings with our little ones and bear record of Him, we open the door for them to share their experiences and to give words to their own spiritual insights and feelings. And when we help children identify the divine source of those feelings, their understanding and love for the Savior will grow line upon line, precept upon precept.

### **Teach children the scriptures**

As young children hear the words from the scriptures and later read the scriptures for themselves, they become familiar with a vocabulary that enables them to express their spiritual feelings. Even very young children, long before they are able to read, can feel the message of the scriptures and begin to understand God's love for them.

Bradley, though only two years old, loved to be a part of family scripture time. When it was his turn, he held his scriptures and carefully turned each page, saying, "Heavenly Father loves me; Heavenly Father loves me." Experiencing the unfailing love of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ is the foundation of testimony.

### **A grandfather testifies**

I know a grandfather who, at a recent family gathering in the mountains, took his grandchildren for a walk. As they came to a clearing in the trees, he invited the young children to sit down on a log while he told them about a 14-year-old

boy named Joseph Smith, who wanted to ask Heavenly Father some questions that were troubling him. The grandfather explained that the boy Joseph went to a grove of trees near his home to pray, having faith that God would answer him. The grandchildren quietly listened, but four-year-old Johnny, who often has difficulty sitting still, could not contain himself. He blurted out, "I've heard that story before."

The grandfather told of Joseph's sincere prayer and how it was answered with a glorious visitation from Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. As he finished, little Johnny grabbed his grandfather's hand and said, "That was a good testimony, Grandpa." He loved hearing the story again.

Though the grandfather had repeated this sacred account many times throughout his life, he said, "Never did the Spirit of the Lord bear stronger witness than when I bore my testimony of Joseph Smith to my own grandchildren." The grandfather and the children had felt the witness of the Holy Ghost. Like Johnny, our children may have heard the scripture stories before, but have they heard us bear our personal testimony of the truthfulness of the accounts and the principles they teach?

Who can measure the influence of simple, sacred words of testimony? Who can calculate the impact of the Spirit that confirms those words? The seeds of testimony that are planted in the hearts of children when they are young are nourished throughout their lives by hearing the testimonies of those who love them enough to bear witness of the truth.

Parents have been given a sacred responsibility. But parents need help. Uncles, aunts, friends, leaders, and teachers add their witness when they share their testimonies with children and youth. Several times the scriptures tell us that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (D&C 6:28).

## Leave a legacy of testimony

It is easy for those of us whose children are grown to feel discouraged and wish we had done more to bear record when our children were young. But it is never too late. My father, who passed away last year, was a living testimony to me throughout his life. But near the end of his life he also wrote his personal history in order to bear record not only to his children and grandchildren but to all of his posterity for generations to come. Nothing he could have left his family is more precious than the record of his testimony and love.

I remember how my father taught me of his testimony with the fingers of his hand:

1. God is our loving Father in Heaven.

2. His Son, Jesus Christ, is our Savior and Redeemer.

3. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and he was the instrument through which the gospel of Jesus Christ was

restored to the earth and the Book of Mormon was translated.

4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church on the earth today.

5. This Church is led by a living prophet who receives revelation.

My brothers and sisters, this is *my* testimony. I humbly bear record to you that these things are true. With all of God's creations, may each of us bear record of Him. In His sacred name, Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "A Child's Prayer."

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## President Hinckley

Sister Susan L. Warner of the Primary general presidency has spoken to us, and the choir then sang "A Child's Prayer."

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve.

## Elder Richard G. Scott

### Reasons to be optimistic

I speak particularly to the youth, although I hope all may benefit from this message. Some youth are pessimistic about the future. They justify that erroneous position by what they see around them and what is occurring in the world. They perceive their future threatened by worsening trends in divorce rates, escalating crime, drugs, terrorist acts, and other atrocities that cripple or destroy life. Throughout your life you have seen the terrible consequences of incorrect choices individuals make that damage their lives and often hurt others. These events are usually called mistakes, lack of judgment, or human weakness. They

are all accompanied by abundant self-justification. When viewed honestly, they are simply violations of the commandments of God that bring the tragic consequences He has warned will follow serious transgression.

Personally, I am enthusiastic about the future. You can be too. You are living in the most exciting period of time in history. Many reasons could be cited for that optimism. Yet your greatest source of hope and assurance is that you have the fulness of the teachings of the Master. They will show you how to live a good life. You can receive ordinances and covenants that, when righteously lived, ensure true happiness and significant attainment.

## Life is beautiful

Life is beautiful when you make the effort to find beauty in it. In some of the most materially deprived parts of the world, I have seen the sunrise in all of its splendor and heard birds joyously welcoming a new day. I have seen beauty reflected in a small pot of flowers by a humble shelter or in the shy, beaming grin of a child at play, intent on discovering the world around him.

You can become depressed if all of your interests are focused on the media with its explicit details of the most worrisome world events. With care you can find much to reverently appreciate in this world Father in Heaven has given you. Begin by remembering that you are a son or daughter of God with divine potential. He will help you have a joyful, fulfilling life.

## Making decisions

Since making the correct decisions is essential to attain your goals in life, consider how they should be made. There are two patterns for making decisions: the first I will call *decisions based upon circumstance*; the second, *decisions based upon eternal truth*. Let us examine each pattern.

The guiding principle in the pattern of *decisions based upon circumstance* is to make choices according to the outcome desired rather than upon what is right or wrong. There is no use of an underlying set of standards to consistently guide those decisions. Each choice is made upon what appears to give the most desired result now. One who follows this path is left to his own strength and capacity and the support of others who can be influenced to act in his favor. Satan encourages choices to be made in this manner. It gives him the greatest opportunity to tempt an individual to make decisions that will be harmful even

though they appear most appealing when made.

In time, one who makes decisions based upon circumstance is virtually assured to commit serious transgressions. There is no iron rod of truth to keep that person in the right way. He will continually face many subtle temptations to make deviations from the commandments. Those choices are justified by arguing that they are not that bad, that they are more socially acceptable and provide a broader base of friends. A clever individual without foundation principles can at times acquire, temporarily, impressive accomplishments. Yet that attainment is like a sand castle. When the test of character comes, it crumbles, often taking others with it.

The second pattern, making *decisions based upon eternal truth*, is the pattern of the Lord. It will always lead you to make decisions guided by His plan of happiness. Such decisions are centered in doing what is right, not in first deciding the result desired. Choosing to do what the Lord has defined as right will, in the long run, always lead to the best outcomes. However, that pattern may require you to set aside something you very much desire now for a greater future good.

## The power of righteousness

Continually bless your life with the power of righteousness. It builds confidence. It engenders trust. It yields enduring, worthy achievement. To be righteous is to seek intently to be obedient to the commandments of God. It is to be clean in thought and act. It is to be honest and just. Righteousness is shown more in acts than in words. A righteous life requires discipline. Discipline is that characteristic which will give you the strength to avoid giving up what you want most in life for something you think you want now. It is a friend, not a harsh taskmaster

that makes life miserable. Discipline is easier to acquire when it is rooted in faith in Jesus Christ, when it is nourished by an understanding of His teachings and plan of happiness.

I commend each one of you select young men and women who live a righteous life, who consistently make decisions based upon eternal truths and not upon that which seems to be most appealing at the moment. In doing right you enlist the help of God to sustain you to be victorious. You need not fear the future. For you, it will be glorious as you continue to obey the laws of God. Not only will your worthiness bless you but also your eternal companion and children when those opportunities come. Yours is an uplifting example that others need in this world where discouragement fills the lives of so many with sadness and disappointment because of the incorrect choices they make.

By making choices consistent with eternal truth, you will develop righteous character and increasing strength to resist temptation. You are assured of the help of God in fulfilling your worthy decisions. You qualify to be led by the Spirit, to choose the correct path. It will warn you of temptations you might not otherwise recognize. The correct decisions you now make will help you prepare to be sealed in the temple to a worthy companion and to form and nurture your own eternal family. All who qualify for those blessings will, in the Lord's due time, have them here or in the next life.

### **Resist temptations to be immoral**

It is in this area that Satan will try hardest to tempt you to make the wrong decisions. Forming your own family is at the very heart of the reason you are here on earth. Make sure that as you are seeking an eternal companion, you do nothing which will offend the Spirit. Satan

tempts a weaker individual to rationalize that when two are in love and agree that sexual intimacies can be performed, such things are acceptable. They positively are not. The boundaries of appropriate behavior are defined by God.

Strongly tied to the sacred, private parts of the body are powerful emotions intended to be used within the covenant of marriage between a man and woman in ways that are appropriate and acceptable to them both. They are an important part of the love and trust that bond a husband and wife together and prepare them for the responsibilities of a family. They bring the blessing of children. These emotions are not to be stimulated or used for personal gratification outside of the covenant of marriage. Do not touch the private, sacred parts of another person's body to stimulate those emotions. Do not allow anyone to do that with you, with or without clothing. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body. These things are wrong. Do not do them. Such practices would undermine your ability to be inspired by the Holy Ghost in the vitally important decisions you must make for your future. They lead to binding addictions and grievous transgressions.

Satan knows that those powerful emotions can be aroused by things you could see, hear, or touch. When stirred, those emotions can be used to lead one to destructive experimentation, then to serious transgressions. He uses pornography through videotapes, movies, magazines, computer images, or contaminated music for this purpose. Close your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to it. Unchecked, it would surely grow unrelentingly from initial curiosity step-by-step to become a raging monster. That demon would wreck wholesome desires, worthy companionship, and noble thoughts and acts until it could destroy you. Don't lift the cover of salacious material in any form, and you will not be captured by it. If you

have become entangled in that devastating web, stop immediately and seek help. Ask the Lord to guide you to that help and give you the strength to overcome that addictive habit.

### **Repent of serious transgressions**

For a moment I speak to anyone who has succumbed to serious temptation. Please stop now. You can do it with the help from an understanding parent, bishop, or stake president. Serious transgression such as immorality requires the help of one who holds keys of authority, such as a bishop or stake president, to quietly work out the repentance process to make sure that it is complete and appropriately done. Do not make the mistake to believe that because you have confessed a serious transgression, you have repented of it. That is an essential step, but it is not all that is required. Nor assume that because someone did not ask you all the important details of a transgression, you need not mention them. You personally must make sure that the bishop or stake president understands those details so that he can help you properly through the process of repentance for full forgiveness. The Savior promised:

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:42–43).

### **Steadfastly choose to do right**

Now<sup>o</sup> to each of you: at times you may feel lonely and misunderstood—I have—because you don’t fit in with the

crowd. Be grateful that your righteous life molds you so that you don’t fit where you don’t belong. This is a temporary period of personal testing and growth. It will be replaced in time with true friends and greater happiness.

The world needs light. Be that light. Your righteousness gives others a confirmation of the goodness of life anchored in eternal truth. If, as a young man, you haven’t yet been a missionary, prepare to be one. You will bless many other lives and crown your own with great, enduring rewards. If you are a young woman, follow the inspired counsel of President Hinckley in the October 1997 conference concerning sister missionaries (in Conference Report, Oct. 1997, 72–73; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 52).

I bear witness that the Savior lives. He loves you. He will guide you through the Holy Ghost, as you steadfastly choose to do what is right, to a future glorious beyond your dreams. I know He will. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Hinckley**

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We express our appreciation to this wonderful Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning.

Following my remarks, this session will conclude with the choir singing “O Thou Kind and Gracious Father.” After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Ned B. Roueché of the Seventy.

The concluding session of this conference will begin at two o’clock this afternoon.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Questions that people ask about us

My beloved brothers and sisters, it is a tremendous honor to speak on this occasion.

We are interviewed frequently by the media these days. As many of you know, I recently appeared on the *Larry King Live* television program. I consented to do so because I felt that while there were possible hazards in it, there also was a great opportunity to speak to the world on issues before us.

In the course of the show Mr. King asked me point-blank, "What is your role? You're the leader of a major religion. What's your role?"

I replied: "My role is to declare doctrine. My role is to stand as an example before the people. My role is to be a voice in defense of the truth. My role is to stand as a conservator of those values which are important in our civilization and our society. My role is to lead."

This reply was extemporaneous. I never expected that question. But in the spirit of that response I have thought this morning that I would like to raise a half-dozen or so questions we are invariably asked by those of the media and other churches. For this occasion I must be necessarily brief. Every one of these issues is worthy of a full discourse.

I have chosen these questions at random, not putting them in any special order except for the first. I do not wish to argue with anyone. I respect the religion of every man and woman, and honor them in their desire to live it. I simply wish to set forth, as simply as I know how, my response to what people are asking about us.

### The Mormon doctrine of Deity

*Question 1: What is the Mormon doctrine of Deity, of God?*

Since the time of the First Vision, people have raised this question, and they continue to raise it and will do so for so long as they believe in the God of their tradition, while we bear testimony of the God of modern revelation.

The Prophet Joseph declared, "It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [1976], 345).

"We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost" (Articles of Faith 1:1). This first article of faith epitomizes our doctrine. We do not accept the Athanasian Creed. We do not accept the Nicene Creed or any other creed based on tradition and the conclusions of men.

We do accept, as the basis of our doctrine, the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith that when he prayed for wisdom in the woods, "the light rested upon me [and] I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

Two beings of substance were before him. He saw them. They were in form like men, only much more glorious in their appearance. He spoke to them. They spoke to him. They were not amorphous spirits. Each was a distinct personality. They were beings of flesh and bone whose nature was reaffirmed in later revelations which came to the Prophet.

Our entire case as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rests on the validity of this glorious First Vision. It was the parting of the curtain to open this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Nothing on which

we base our doctrine, nothing we teach, nothing we live by is of greater importance than this initial declaration. I submit that if Joseph Smith talked with God the Father and His Beloved Son, then all else of which he spoke is true. This is the hinge on which turns the gate that leads to the path of salvation and eternal life.

Are we Christians? Of course we are Christians. We believe in Christ. We worship Christ. We take upon ourselves in solemn covenant His holy name. The Church to which we belong carries His name. He is our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer through whom came the great Atonement with salvation and eternal life.

### **Attitude toward homosexuality**

*Question 2: What is your Church's attitude toward homosexuality?*

In the first place, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God. We believe that marriage may be eternal through exercise of the power of the everlasting priesthood in the house of the Lord.

People inquire about our position on those who consider themselves so-called gays and lesbians. My response is that we love them as sons and daughters of God. They may have certain inclinations which are powerful and which may be difficult to control. Most people have inclinations of one kind or another at various times. If they do not act upon these inclinations, then they can go forward as do all other members of the Church. If they violate the law of chastity and the moral standards of the Church, then they are subject to the discipline of the Church, just as others are.

We want to help these people, to strengthen them, to assist them with their problems and to help them with their difficulties. But we cannot stand idle if they indulge in immoral activity, if they try to uphold and defend and live in a so-called

same-sex marriage situation. To permit such would be to make light of the very serious and sacred foundation of God-sanctioned marriage and its very purpose, the rearing of families.

### **Position on abortion**

*Question 3: What is your position on abortion?*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were more than 1,200,000 abortions performed in 1995 in the United States alone. What has happened to our regard for human life? How can women, and men, deny the great and precious gift of life, which is divine in its origin and nature?

How wonderful a thing is a child. How beautiful is a newborn babe. There is no greater miracle than the creation of human life.

Abortion is an ugly thing, a debasing thing, a thing which inevitably brings remorse and sorrow and regret.

While we denounce it, we make allowance in such circumstances as when pregnancy is the result of incest or rape, when the life or health of the mother is judged by competent medical authority to be in serious jeopardy, or when the fetus is known by competent medical authority to have serious defects that will not allow the baby to survive beyond birth.

But such instances are rare, and there is only a negligible probability of their occurring. In these circumstances, those who face the question are asked to consult with their local ecclesiastical leaders and to pray in great earnestness, receiving a confirmation through prayer before proceeding.

There is a far better way.

If there is no prospect of marriage to the man involved, leaving the mother alone, there remains the very welcome option of placing the child for adoption by parents who will love it and care for

it. There are many such couples in good homes who long for a child and cannot have one.

### **Position on polygamy**

*Question 4: What is the Church's position on polygamy?*

We are faced these days with many newspaper articles on this subject. This has arisen out of a case of alleged child abuse on the part of some of those practicing plural marriage.

I wish to state categorically that this Church has nothing whatever to do with those practicing polygamy. They are not members of this Church. Most of them have never been members. They are in violation of the civil law. They know they are in violation of the law. They are subject to its penalties. The Church, of course, has no jurisdiction whatever in this matter.

If any of our members are found to be practicing plural marriage, they are excommunicated, the most serious penalty the Church can impose. Not only are those so involved in direct violation of the civil law, they are in violation of the law of this Church. An article of our faith is binding upon us. It states, "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" (Articles of Faith 1:12). One cannot obey the law and disobey the law at the same time.

There is no such thing as a "Mormon fundamentalist." It is a contradiction to use the two words together.

More than a century ago God clearly revealed unto His prophet Wilford Woodruff that the practice of plural marriage should be discontinued, which means that it is now against the law of God. Even in countries where civil or religious law allows polygamy, the Church teaches that marriage must be monogamous and does not accept into its membership those practicing plural marriage.

### **Reasons for the Church's growth**

*Question 5: To what do you attribute the growth of the Church?*

We are growing. We are growing in a wonderful way. Between natural growth and converts baptized, we are adding about 400,000 per year. On a base of 10 million, that is about 4 percent, which is exceptionally good for a church.

People are looking for a solid anchor in a world of shifting values. They want something they can hold to as the world about them increasingly appears to be in disarray.

They are welcomed as new converts and are made to feel at home. They feel the warmth of the fellowship of the Saints.

They are put to work. They are given responsibility. They are made to feel a part of the great onward movement of this, the work of God.

And, of course, we have missionaries to assist them in their search for truth.

They soon discover that much is expected of them as Latter-day Saints. They do not resent it. They measure up, and they like it. They expect their religion to be demanding, to require reformation in their lives. They meet the requirements. They bear testimony of the great good that has come to them. They are enthusiastic and faithful.

### **Position on spouse and child abuse**

*Question 6: What about spouse and child abuse?*

We condemn most strongly abusive behavior in any form. We denounce the physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse of one's spouse or children. Our proclamation on the family declares: "Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. . . . Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for

their physical and spiritual needs. . . . Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102).

We are doing all we know how to do to stamp out this terrible evil. When there is recognition of equality between the husband and the wife, when there is acknowledgment that each child born into the world is a child of God, then there will follow a greater sense of responsibility to nurture, to help, to love with an enduring love those for whom we are responsible.

No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to hold the priesthood of God. No man who abuses his wife or children is worthy to be a member in good standing in this Church. The abuse of one's spouse and children is a most serious offense before God, and any who indulge in it may expect to be disciplined by the Church.

### Financing the Church's operations

*Question 7: How does the Church finance its operations?*

Brother Faust has spoken on that very ably this morning. Those in the outside world wonder how we are able to do so much. They speak and write of the Church as having great wealth and tremendous assets.

We do have assets. We have houses of worship that dot the earth. We are building a large number of new ones every year. We carry on a great program of higher education, of seminaries and institutes. We have an unequaled family history facility. We foster a tremendous missionary organization that entails the maintenance of mission homes and other facilities in addition to the cost of maintaining the missionaries, which is borne by the missionaries themselves and their families. We carry on other programs, all of which require money.

But all of these and more are money consuming and not money creating. It costs a great deal to operate this Church. Its worldwide operations are financed through the consecrated tithes of faithful members. What a wonderful and glorious principle is the law of tithing. It is so simple to understand and follow. It is the Lord's law of finance.

I thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart for the faith of those who pay their honest tithes. Are they the poorer for it? We testify that somehow under the divine providence of the Lord, He makes it up to us and does so generously. It is not a tax. It is a voluntary offering given in confidentiality. It is a principle that carries with it a remarkable promise. God has stated that He will “open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:10). That is *His* promise. He has the capacity to fulfill that promise. And it is my testimony that He does so.

### This is God's work

Well, that is all I have time for now. There could be many other items. These are only a sample of questions that those of a curious world ask of us.

We have to know this, you and I who subscribe to the doctrines of this Church, that this is God's work, directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, that it operates according to Their plan and Their pattern, and that it carries with it Their blessings.

Why are we such a happy people? It is because of our faith, the quiet assurance that abides in our hearts that our Father in Heaven, overseeing all, will look after His sons and daughters who walk before Him with love and appreciation and obedience. We will ever be a happy people if we will so conduct our lives. Sin never was happiness. Transgression never was happiness. Falsehood in word or behavior never was happiness.

Happiness lies in obedience to the teachings and commandments of God our Eternal Father and His Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I have said before from this pulpit, my brothers and sisters, we love you. We love you for your faith and goodness. We love you for your willingness to do whatever you are asked to do. We love you for your obedience to the will of the Lord.

Knowing this work to be true, we go forward, each of us. May we make a renewed effort to put on the whole armor of God and look to Him is my humble prayer in the name of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "O Thou Kind and Gracious Father."

Elder Ned B. Roueché offered the benediction.

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## SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

The fifth session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference commenced at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, October 4, 1998. This session was conducted by President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

The Tabernacle Choir provided the music, with Jerold Ottley conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

President Monson made the following remarks as the meeting began.

### President Thomas S. Monson

We welcome you this afternoon to the fifth and concluding session of the 168th Semiannual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. President Gordon B. Hinckley, who presides at this conference, has asked me, Brother Monson, to conduct this session.

We welcome our state and national officials and others who are our guests. You honor us by your presence. We also welcome all of the General Authorities of the Church to this session, including Andrew W. Peterson, who is recovering nicely after a very, very long time in rehabilitation.

We extend our greetings and blessings to members of the Church and many friends everywhere who are participating in these proceedings by radio, television, cable, or satellite transmission.

The music for this session will be provided by the Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Brother Jerold Ottley, with Brother John Longhurst at the organ.

The choir will now sing "Redeemer of Israel." The invocation will then be offered by Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Redeemer of Israel." Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr offered the invocation.

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### President Monson

The choir will now sing "Called to Serve." Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will then be our first speaker.

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The choir sang "Called to Serve."

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### Counseling grandchildren at Bear Lake

Each year we have a family vacation at Bear Lake. It is an exciting week of getting acquainted with grandchildren. For the past few years I have listened to their opportunities and challenges. They have let me know of the increased pressures of being in the world but not of the world. Movies, television, Internet, designer clothes, extreme fashions, Sabbath-breaking activities, et cetera, escalate the magnitude of their temptations. Moreover, peer pressures force difficult decisions about whether to follow the crowd or stand up for the principles taught by converted and committed parents and the Church.

This year I decided to be a little more aggressive in counseling my grandchildren. I wanted to provide them with a framework to resist temptations and thrive in today's complex world. Our vacation at the lake extends for four days, so I decided to purchase a loose-leaf binder for each of them and include a topic for discussion for each day. Each insert included some scripture references and quotes that were intended to start fruitful discussions between the generations.

On the first day there was not much interest in discussions, but the momentum seemed to increase each day. The experiment had enough success that I would like to play grandfather to each of you young people listening today to see if we can stimulate some thoughtful discussions in your homes with your parents.

### Appreciate the land where you live

*Topic number 1: Appreciation for the land in which we live.* During one of the early conferences of the Church, held on January 2 of 1831, the Lord, through revelation, gave the Prophet Joseph Smith

a vision of how He valued the land that He had created for His children. In Doctrine and Covenants 38:17–20 we read:

“And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

“And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

“And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

“And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away.”

The Lord has blessed us with lands of promise to enjoy during our mortal probation. The nations of the earth, if they would continue to follow the ways of the Lord, could be a blessing to His children here. You special young sons and daughters, He expects you to be especially mindful of the bounteous blessings you have received from Him.

With these blessings, of course, come responsibilities. We are expected to be subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, and obey, honor, and sustain the law (see Articles of Faith 1:12). To obey, honor, and sustain, we must know the law and live it. We must be good citizens in our church, schools, and communities. We must also be prepared to make our contribution by giving service to others.

The best way I know of to make a contribution to the land we live in is to be prepared for the future. The Lord has promised us that if we are prepared, we should have no fear (see D&C 38:30). If we make an effort to obtain the best education available to us, we are in a

better position to be self-sufficient and not to become a burden on the society in which we live.

I read in a newspaper a few weeks ago of the earning potential with increased levels of education. The difference between no high school degree and a high school graduate is an average income increase of 38 percent. From a high school diploma to some college, the increase is 20 percent, and from a high school diploma to a university degree, the increase is 56 percent. Yes, education does pay. It is never too early to determine the direction you want to prepare yourself for. Don't wait until you register for college to decide what you want to study. It is such a waste of time and money to attempt to pursue an education without having a definite goal.

### Self-esteem

*Topic number 2: Self-esteem.* In the eighth Psalm of David, he gave us a vision of who we are and the eternal opportunities which are ours. He said:

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. . . .

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: . . .

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1, 3-6, 9).

Have you ever thought of yourself as a junior angel crowned with glory and honor? Every one of our Father in Heaven's children is great in His sight.

If the Lord sees greatness in you, how then should you see yourself? We have all been blessed with many talents and abilities. Some have been blessed with the talent to sing, some to paint, some to speak, some to dance, some to create beautiful things with their hands, and others to render compassionate service. Some may possess many, others only a few. It matters not the size or the quantity but the effort we put forth to develop the talents and abilities we have received. You are not competing with anyone else. You are only competing with yourself to do the best with whatever you have received. Each talent that is developed will be greatly needed and will give you tremendous fulfillment and satisfaction during your life.

The almost universal gift everyone can develop is the creation of a pleasant disposition, an even temperament. It will open more doors for you and give you more opportunities than any other characteristic I can think of.

Also, remember the promise of the Lord about caring for our physical bodies. If we keep them clean, nourish them properly, and get adequate rest, we will "find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." We "shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint" (D&C 89:19-20).

Above all, we must live with hope. In the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon, Moroni reminds us: "And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a more excellent hope; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared" (Ether 12:32).

Live with hope that you can achieve and accomplish and develop the great gifts our Father in Heaven has given to you and one day "receive an inheritance" among the mansions of the Father.

## Love of family

*Topic number 3: Love of family.* The words that the Prophet Joseph Smith remembered from that tremendous visit of the angel Moroni to him on the night of September 21, 1823, included a special promise made to families:

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (D&C 2:1-3).

This great vision to the Prophet Joseph Smith reestablished the doctrine of eternal family units. The eternal family is central to the gospel of our Savior. There would be no reason for Him to return to earth to rule and reign over His kingdom unless the eternal family unit had been established for our Father in Heaven's children. When we understand the eternal role of the family, the nourishing and developing of strong family ties take on even greater significance.

I have watched with great interest the addition of a new granddaughter in our family. There was an immediate bonding with her brother and sister. Her siblings held her with such tender and loving care.

Learning to appreciate what it means to belong to an eternal family is of great importance to us. Remember, you are part of that eternal unit that requires your best effort. Be certain you bring warmth, kindness, understanding, consideration, and a strong love to your eternal family.

## Love of God and obedience to His law

The final topic I included in the binder was under the heading of "Love of God." From the revelations received

by the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, we read, "Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him" (D&C 59:5).

The Lord has used the heart as a way of describing the innermost nature of His children. The scriptures are filled with references to the heart, such as the pure in heart, an abundant heart, a cheerful heart, and so forth. In 1 Samuel we read, "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

In our hearts do we feel a sense of gratitude and devotion to the Father? Are we of one heart with Him to whom we owe everything? The test of our devotion to the Lord seems to be the way we serve Him.

We have implanted in our souls a desire to be free. The Lord understood this when He granted us our mortal probation. With that freedom, however, comes accountability. We are instructed not to idle away our time or bury our talents and not use them. We are expected to make our lives better through our own initiatives and efforts. We must find our own relationship with our Eternal Father. We must gain our own testimony. We must decide whether to conform our lives to the Lord's standards. We must choose as Joshua did when he said:

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

I read an article the other day which stated that if an employer did not hire young, bright 16-year-olds today, with their advanced understanding and feel for technology, the business would be out

of date in the next decade. What a marvelous age you live in. With all of your increased opportunities, however, comes the challenge of staying close to the Lord and being obedient to His law. This is the way you remain strong and able to withstand the multitude of worldly pressures.

### Personal testimony

My final entry in the binder I presented to my grandchildren was my personal testimony as to the truthfulness of the gospel of our Lord and Savior. I leave my testimony with each of you great young people that I know that God lives and that He directs His work among His children here on earth.

I know that He sent His Son to the world to be an atoning sacrifice for all mankind, and those who embrace His gospel and follow Him shall enjoy eternal life, the greatest gift God has given to His children.

I know that He directed the restoration of the gospel again here upon the earth through the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I know that the only lasting joy and happiness you will ever find during your mortal experience will come by following the Savior, obeying His law, and keeping His commandments. This is my witness to you, you great young people, in the name of our Lord and Savior, even Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Ronald T. Halverson, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy in the April conference.

## Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

### Personal purity

As modern winds of immorality swirl luridly around them, I am concerned for any of our youth or young adults who may be confused about principles of personal purity, about obligations of total chastity before marriage and complete fidelity after it. Against what is happening in the world they see and hear, and hoping to fortify parents as they teach their children a higher standard, I wish to speak today about moral cleanliness. Because this subject is as sacred as any I know, I earnestly pray for the Holy Spirit to guide me in remarks that are more candid than I would wish to make. Today I know how Jacob in the Book of Mormon felt when he said on the same topic, "It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech."<sup>1</sup>

In approaching this subject, I do not document a host of social ills for which the statistics are as grim as the examples are offensive. Nor will I present here a checklist of do's and don'ts about dating and boy-girl relationships. What I wish to do is more personal—I wish to try to answer questions some of you may have been asking: *Why* should we be morally clean? *Why* is it such an important issue to God? Does the Church *have* to be so strict about it when others don't seem to be? How could anything society exploits and glamorizes so openly be very sacred or serious?

### A river of fire

May I begin with a lesson from civilization's long, instructive story. Will and Ariel Durant have written: "No man [or woman], however brilliant or well-in-

formed, can . . . safely . . . dismiss . . . the wisdom of [lessons learned] in the laboratory of history. A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; [but] if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he . . . understand[s] that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group."<sup>2</sup>

A more important scriptural observation is offered by the writer of Proverbs: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? . . . Whoso committeth adultery . . . destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away."<sup>3</sup>

### Why is sexual purity so important?

Why is this matter of sexual relationships so severe that fire is almost always the metaphor, with passion pictured vividly in flames? What is there in the potentially hurtful heat of this that leaves one's soul—or the whole world, for that matter—destroyed if that flame is left unchecked and those passions unrestrained? What is there in all of this that prompts Alma to warn his son Corianton that sexual transgression is "an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost?"<sup>4</sup>

By assigning such seriousness to a physical appetite so universally bestowed, what is God trying to tell us about its place in His plan for all men and women? I submit to you He is doing precisely that—commenting about the very plan of life itself. Clearly among His greatest concerns regarding mortality are how one gets into this world and how one gets out of it. He has set very strict limits in these matters.

Fortunately, in the case of how life is terminated, most seem to be quite responsible. But in the significance of *giving* life, we sometimes find near-criminal irresponsibility. May I offer three reasons why this is an issue of such magnitude and consequence in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### The doctrine of the human soul

First is the revealed, restored doctrine of the human soul.

One of the "plain and precious" truths restored in this dispensation is that "the spirit and the body are the soul of man"<sup>5</sup> and that when the spirit and body are separated, men and women "cannot receive a fulness of joy."<sup>6</sup> That is the reason why obtaining a body is so fundamentally important in the first place, why sin of any kind is such a serious matter (namely because it is sin that ultimately brings both physical and spiritual death), and why the resurrection of the body is so central to the great triumph of Christ's Atonement.

*The body is an essential part of the soul.* This distinctive and very important Latter-day Saint doctrine underscores why sexual sin is so serious. We declare that one who uses the God-given body of another without divine sanction abuses the very soul of that individual, abuses the central purpose and processes of life—"the very key"<sup>7</sup> to life, as President Boyd K. Packer once called it. In exploiting the body of another—which means exploiting his or her soul—one desecrates the Atonement of Christ, which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life. And when one mocks the Son of Righteousness, one steps into a realm of heat hotter and holier than the noonday sun. You cannot do so and not be burned.

Please, never say: "Who does it hurt? Why not a little freedom? I can transgress now and repent later." Please don't be so foolish and so cruel. You cannot

with impunity "crucify Christ afresh."<sup>8</sup> "Flee fornication,"<sup>9</sup> Paul cries, and flee "*anything like unto it*,"<sup>10</sup> the Doctrine and Covenants adds. Why? Well, for one reason, because of the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world so that we *could* flee.<sup>11</sup> We owe Him something for that. Indeed, we owe Him everything for that. "Ye are not your own," Paul says. "Ye [have been] bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."<sup>12</sup> In sexual transgression the soul is at stake—the body and the spirit.

### The ultimate symbol of total union

Secondly, may I stress that human intimacy is reserved for a married couple because it is the ultimate symbol of total union, a totality and a union ordained and defined by God. From the Garden of Eden onward, marriage was intended to mean the complete merger of a man and a woman—their hearts, hopes, lives, love, family, future, everything. Adam said of Eve that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and that they were to be "one flesh" in their life together.<sup>13</sup> This is a union of such completeness that we use the word *seal* to convey its eternal promise. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said we perhaps could render such a sacred bond as being "welded"<sup>14</sup> one to another.

But such a total union, such an unyielding commitment between a man and a woman, can only come with the proximity and permanence afforded in a marriage covenant, with solemn promises and the pledge of all they possess—their very hearts and minds, all their days and all their dreams.

Can you see the moral schizophrenia that comes from *pretending* you are one, pretending you have made solemn promises before God, sharing the physical symbols and the physical intimacy of your counterfeit union but then fleeing,

retreating, severing all such other aspects of what was meant to be a total obligation?

*In matters of human intimacy, you must wait!* You must wait until you can give everything, and you cannot give everything until you are legally and lawfully married. To give illicitly that which is not yours to give (remember, "you are not your own") and to give only part of that which cannot be followed with the gift of your whole self is emotional Russian roulette. If you persist in pursuing physical satisfaction without the sanction of heaven, you run the terrible risk of such spiritual, psychic damage that you may undermine *both* your longing for physical intimacy and your ability to give wholehearted devotion to a later, truer love. You may come to that truer moment of ordained love, of real union, only to discover to your horror that what you should have saved you have spent, and that only God's grace can recover the piecemeal dissipation of the virtue you so casually gave away. On your wedding day the very best gift you can give your eternal companion is your very best self—clean and pure and worthy of such purity in return.

### A symbol of the relationship with God

Thirdly, may I say that physical intimacy is not only a symbolic union between a husband and a wife—the very uniting of their souls—but it is also symbolic of a shared relationship between them and their Father in Heaven. He is immortal and perfect. We are mortal and imperfect. Nevertheless we seek ways even in mortality whereby we can unite with Him spiritually. In so doing we gain some access to both the grace and the majesty of His power. Those special moments include kneeling at a marriage altar in the house of the Lord, blessing a newborn baby, baptizing and confirming a new member of the Church, partaking

of the emblems of the Lord's Supper, and so forth.

These are moments when we quite literally unite our will with God's will, our spirit with His spirit, where communion through the veil becomes very real. At such moments we not only acknowledge His divinity but we quite literally take something of that divinity to ourselves. One aspect of that divinity given to virtually all men and women is the use of His power to create a human body, that wonder of all wonders, a genetically and spiritually unique being never before seen in the history of the world and never to be duplicated again in all the ages of eternity. A child, your child—with eyes and ears and fingers and toes and a future of unspeakable grandeur.

Probably only a parent who has held that newborn infant in his or her arms understands the wonder of which I speak. Suffice it to say that of all the titles God has chosen for Himself, *Father* is the one He favors most, and *creation* is His watchword—especially human creation, creation in His image. You and I have been given something of that godliness, *but under the most serious and sacred of restrictions. The only control placed on us is self-control*—self-control born of respect for the divine sacramental power this gift represents.

### Control sacred procreative powers

My beloved friends, especially my young friends, can you see why personal purity is such a serious matter? Can you understand why the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles would issue a proclamation declaring that “the means by which mortal life is created [is] divinely appointed” and that “the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife”?<sup>15</sup>

Don't be deceived and don't be destroyed. Unless such powers are con-

trolled and commandments kept, your future may be burned; your world could go up in flames. Penalty may not come on the precise day of transgression, but it comes surely and certainly enough. And unless there is true repentance and obedience to a merciful God, then someday, somewhere, the morally cavalier and unclean will pray like the rich man who wished Lazarus to “dip . . . his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”<sup>16</sup>

### The peace and renewal of repentance

I have declared here the solemn word of revelation that the spirit and the body constitute the soul of man, and that through the Atonement of Christ the body shall rise from the grave to unite with the spirit in an eternal existence. That body is therefore something to be kept pure and holy. Do not be afraid of soiling its hands in honest labor. Do not be afraid of scars that may come in defending the truth or fighting for the right, but beware scars that spiritually disfigure, that come to you in activities you should not have undertaken, that befall you in places where you should not have gone. Beware the wounds of any battle in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.<sup>17</sup>

If some few of you are carrying such wounds—and I know that you are—to you is extended the peace and renewal of repentance available through the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. In such serious matters the path of repentance is not easily begun or painlessly traveled. But the Savior of the world will walk that essential journey with you. He will strengthen you when you waver. He will be your light when it seems most dark. He will take your hand and be your hope when hope seems all you have left. His compassion and mercy, with all their cleansing and healing power, are freely given to all who truly wish complete for-

givenness and will take the steps that lead to it.

### Glorify God in body and spirit

I bear witness of the great plan of life, of the powers of godliness, of mercy and forgiveness and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ—all of which have profound meaning in matters of moral cleanliness. I testify that we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit. I thank heaven for legions of the young who are doing just that and helping others do the same. I thank heaven for homes where this is taught. That lives of personal purity may be revered by all, I pray in the name of purity Himself, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. Jacob 2:7; see Jacob 2 and 3 for the full context of his sermon on chastity.

2. *The Lessons of History* (1968), 35–36.
3. Proverbs 6:27–28, 32–33.
4. Alma 39:5.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:34.
7. In Conference Report, Apr. 1972, 139; or *Ensign*, July 1972, 113.
8. See Hebrews 6:6.
9. 1 Corinthians 6:18.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 59:6; italics added.
11. See especially Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–20.
12. 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; italics added; see also verses 13–18.
13. See Genesis 2:23–24.
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
15. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
16. Luke 16:24.
17. See James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, Oct. 1913, 117.

## Elder Ronald T. Halverson

### The gospel brings a woman peace and joy

Several years ago I interviewed a young woman for a temple recommend to receive her own endowment and to be married and sealed for time and all eternity. As I completed the interview and signed the recommend, tears were streaming down her cheeks. I said, “Please share with me your feelings.” Then she told me the following story.

Since her youth she had sought to find truth and direction in her life. She had yearned to find peace and happiness, but no matter where she looked, she could not find it. It had come to a point where she was very distraught, assuming there was really nothing in life that had true meaning or was fulfilling. In this frame of mind, one evening while visiting a dear friend and recounting her concerns and despair she said: “I looked

behind the sofa where I was sitting to the bookshelf. My eyes fell upon a particular volume, and a compelling feeling came over me. I knew I needed to find out what was written on its pages.”

She took the book from the shelf and read the title, the Book of Mormon. She asked her friend where she had received it. Her friend indicated that two young missionaries stopped her on the street and gave her the book but only after a commitment to read it. Due to a lack of time, she had just put it on the shelf.

“I started to read,” she said. “I could not put it down.” A feeling came over her that she had never felt before. Her friend told her that she could take the book with her. She went home and continued to read through the night. The next morning she went into the streets looking for the two young missionaries.

It didn't take long to find them. They agreed to teach her the gospel, and in a few weeks she was baptized a member of the Church.

Through her tears, she explained that since that day she had found a joy and inner peace that she never dreamed possible.

Living in a small town with few members and even fewer opportunities to marry in the Church, she didn't dare hope that she might one day marry in the temple. But she felt it was through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that she met a young man while vacationing in another country. He was a member of the Church and honored his priesthood. They had fallen in love, and he had asked her to marry him in the temple. The realization that she could now go to the house of the Lord and be sealed for time and all eternity brought joy to her soul and feelings of thankfulness and gratitude that were overwhelming and impossible to describe.

"I continue to ask myself," she said, "Why me? Why me? I am so blessed."

Her humble, sweet spirit and testimony touched me deeply. As she left, we both shed tears of joy and appreciation.

### **"In me ye might have peace"**

I have often thought of that experience, and each time I do, it brings a deep feeling of gratitude for our Savior and what He has done for us, for the price that He paid to make it possible for each one of us to find inner peace in a troubled world.

President David O. McKay wrote:

"From the forty days' fast on the Mount of Temptation to the moment on the cross when he cried in triumph: 'It is finished,' Christ's life was a divine example of subduing and overcoming. Full of significance are his words spoken in his farewell address to his disciples:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In

the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33)."<sup>1</sup>

The peace that He spoke of is defined by one writer: "True joy is an intense inner peace and happiness."<sup>2</sup>

It is the peace that Paul spoke of, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."<sup>3</sup> The gospel of Jesus Christ brings peace of mind, heals the soul, and calms the troubled heart. It gives definition and meaning to the purpose of life, the spiritual reassurance that God lives and Jesus is the Christ.

Joy and peace of mind that truth seekers throughout the world desire to find can be found only by knowing and living the principles of the gospel. The Savior said:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."<sup>4</sup>

Elder Franklin D. Richards extended an invitation to all who seek true joy, in these words: "Those who are seeking a plan of life that will bring them peace, relief from inner tensions, happiness, and growth and development will find it in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ." He followed by saying, "We invite your sincere and prayerful consideration."<sup>5</sup>

### **Miracle of forgiveness brings peace**

There may be those who feel like they are lost and too far gone to receive the great blessings that the gospel can give, but Elder Spencer W. Kimball wrote: "The essence of the miracle of forgiveness is that it brings peace to the previously anxious, restless, frustrated, perhaps tormented soul. In a world of turmoil and contention this is indeed a priceless gift."<sup>6</sup>

### Share testimony to help others find peace

After the Savior taught His disciples of the peace He would leave with them and the Comforter He would send from the Father, He charged them by saying, "And ye also shall bear witness."<sup>7</sup> He taught that "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."<sup>8</sup>

Brothers and sisters, there are many on the earth who desire a witness of truth and earnestly seek the peace and joy promised by the Savior, but "who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men . . . and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it."<sup>9</sup>

We live in a world where many hear of Christ but do not know Him. It is incumbent upon us as members of the Church to share our testimony with others. In humility we bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If they will but open their hearts to Him, they will find the reassurance, the peace and joy that His gospel brings. They will find strength to meet the challenges of life in a difficult world, and by accepting His teachings and keeping His command-

ments they will be heirs to His promised blessings.

To this I bear my humble witness in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 396.
2. Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (1988), 287.
3. Philippians 4:7.
4. John 15:10-11.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 14; or *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 37.
6. *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 363.
7. John 15:27.
8. John 15:8.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 123:12.

### President Monson

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy.

Our next speaker will be Elder Earl M. Monson, who was sustained as a member of the Seventy at April conference. He will be followed by the choir and congregation singing "I Am a Child of God."

## Elder Earl M. Monson

### Establishing the Church

The Book of Mormon testifies of the resurrected Savior ministering to the Nephites. He included in His teachings some things about the latter days: "I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people . . . and shall establish again among them my Zion."<sup>1</sup>

The prophet Daniel "foresaw and foretold the establishment of the kingdom of God in the latter days."<sup>2</sup> In this dispensation the Lord has declared, "If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them."<sup>3</sup>

There are many references which confirm this is the time for His Church to be established in preparation for His Second Coming. We are the ones with the special opportunity of helping build His kingdom once again. I offer prayers of gratitude that I have any part in this work which has been spoken of for centuries by many prophets and the Lord Himself.

Establishing His Church is a unique assignment. We must take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people in their own language without defiling the purity of the message. The Church must help de-

velop leaders of integrity—leaders from whom honest people everywhere can receive inspired guidance. The Church has an equal obligation for all who have lived, who now live, and who will yet live on this earth. The Church must teach correct laws and ordinances, in the Lord's way, which qualify the obedient believer for eternal life. There are many other requirements familiar to us that make the task of establishing such a church seem overwhelming, but such is the assignment from the Lord.

### **Comparison with building temples**

And how is such a church established? On a much smaller scale, I know what it takes to build a beautiful temple, and it is more than detailed plans or quality materials. It requires skillful workers in every part of the process, each one doing his best work in a united effort. I also know that the leadership of an inspired prophet is vital in building lovely temples, as it is in every other part of this great work. I dearly cherish the special opportunities I have had to see inspiration and the Spirit of the Lord flow through President Hinckley. He is truly a prophet for this time.

As in building temples, dedicated workers are a necessary part of establishing the Lord's kingdom on earth. The work moves well if each one has a driving conviction in his heart and mind that Jesus Christ is the head of this Church, that He truly lives and guides this work, and that all of us have an important part in bringing it to pass. We must be willing to learn gospel principles, practice them, and pray about them with sincere hearts, with real intent and having faith in Christ. Then comes the assurance that the principles are true. And with true conversion comes an excitement about being part of this great work.

### **Strength based on personal testimony**

It is an interesting thought that the Lord has declared this is the time to establish His Church, and then to realize it happens as each of us develops a firm, unwavering testimony of the truthfulness of its precepts. The Church can build temples, send missionaries throughout the world, and do marvelous humanitarian acts, but it still comes to what exists in our own thoughts and feelings and actions as to how solidly it is established. Will the good news of the gospel be shared with our neighbors; will new converts be warmly fellowshipped; will the temples be filled with dedicated patrons doing work for their ancestry; will families learn to live on a celestial level—all because we have a pure love for our Father in Heaven, His teachings, and His children?

President Kimball declared that the kingdom of God, which we seek to establish, "can only be done through consistent and concerted daily effort by every single member of the Church."<sup>4</sup>

The wonderful part is that every person devoted to the establishment of the latter-day Church of Jesus Christ receives innumerable and eternal blessings. It has been said that "the greatest waste in the world is the difference between what we are and what we may become."<sup>5</sup> The gospel is at the heart of what we may become and how to get there. With that help we are able to live in this world while separating ourselves from that which is debasing, and we can become better people while we are here.

### **Choose the better part**

Most of us want to live pure lives and contribute, yet we still falter occasionally. Perhaps it helps to reflect on Solomon's observation that as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he."<sup>6</sup> It is my privilege to

know many who have focused their thoughts on the wholesome and the pure things of life. They ponder on the scriptures, and they strive to magnify callings given to them. The gospel becomes a way of life, and over time they evidence peace and tranquillity in themselves and bless greatly those around them.

We may not appreciate the capacity of our minds to absorb and remember if we think it doesn't matter what books or movies or other activities are fed into it. The Lord wisely told us to seek first for the kingdom of God, and then other desirable things will also come to us.

Elder Sterling W. Sill noted that "the mind, like the dyer's hand, is colored by what it holds." That is, if I hold in my hand . . . purple dye, my hand becomes purple."<sup>7</sup> Those who help establish the Church know what is bad, but they consistently choose the better part and fill their minds with pure thoughts. Establishing the kingdom of God on the earth depends on individual members of the Church using their God-given agency to think and say and act in keeping with the gospel of Jesus Christ at all times.

Those who feel they are too busy or have too many problems to be part of this work are likely the ones who would receive the greatest benefit from wholehearted participation. And the valuable service they could give would greatly bless others as well.

Now is the time to establish the Lord's Church by securing a confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel in

our own hearts and doing what priesthood leaders ask of us. As we do so, we can come to know the personal blessings found in a great plan of happiness. We will come to know our Savior and what He has done for us and feel His great love. A sweet assurance of what is truth comes into our lives. We will sense that we are an important part of an eternal cause. We will truly enjoy the leadership of a wonderful prophet and other great leaders. Our lives can be filled with the peace of the Lord and the benefit of having His Church solidly established on this earth. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 21:1.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 138:44.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 10:53.
4. In Conference Report, Apr. 1978, 122; or *Ensign*, May 1978, 81.
5. Anonymous.
6. Proverbs 23:7.
7. In Conference Report, Oct. 1954, 28.

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The choir and congregation sang  
"I Am a Child of God."

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#### President Monson

We will now be pleased to hear from Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy. He will be followed by Elder Gordon T. Watts of the Seventy. Elder Oaks and Elder Watts were sustained as members of the Seventy at the April conference.

### Elder Merrill C. Oaks

#### Continuing revelation is essential

Just over two years before his death, the Prophet Joseph Smith published the Articles of Faith. The ninth article of faith states, "We believe all that God has

revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." I will speak concerning the final sentence, "He will

yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." This principle of continuing revelation is an essential part of the kingdom of God.

In the fourth and fifth verses of the Doctrine and Covenants section 21, the Lord declared to the Church their obligation to heed the guidance of His prophet:

"Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

"For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."

The Prophet Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon and received the revelations laying the foundation for the restored Church. He had premonitions of his own death and hastened to confer on the Quorum of the Twelve all the priesthood keys. In the words of Wilford Woodruff: "And thus addressing the Twelve, [Joseph] exclaimed, 'upon your shoulders the kingdom rests, and you must round up your shoulders, and bear it; for I have had to do it until now. But now the responsibility rests upon you'" (*Times and Seasons*, 1 Nov. 1844, 698).

### Revelation continues today

Revelation and guidance from heaven did not end with the death of Joseph Smith. "Many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" have been revealed through those who succeeded him as President of the Church. In the words of President Spencer W. Kimball:

"Since that momentous day in 1820, additional scripture has continued to come, including the numerous and vital revelations flowing in a never-ending stream from God to his prophets on the earth. . . .

"There are those who would assume that with the printing and binding of these sacred records [and he was speaking here of the four standard works], that would be the 'end of the prophets.' But again we testify to the world that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day. We testify also that there is, since 1830 when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, and will continue to be, so long as time shall last, a prophet, recognized of God and his people, who will continue to interpret the mind and will of the Lord" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 115; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 78).

We have large amounts of written historical material available to us, including sermons of early Church leaders. These give us background that help us understand the early events of the Restoration and the situations that existed in those days. This year we have the privilege of studying teachings of the prophet Brigham Young in priesthood and Relief Society meetings. There are wonderful continuity and agreement of these teachings and those of our more current prophets.

### To those who are disturbed by changes

As the policies and procedures of the Church are refined by continuing revelation and inspiration, there are those who become disturbed by any changes. Some literally hunt for situations where earlier Church leaders or members made statements which are not in complete harmony with our understanding and practices today. The mind-set of some is that anything coming from an earlier time must be more correct.

I would offer the following thoughts on such matters: (1) Some of the procedures of the Church were not completely developed early in this dispensation and

have been amplified and clarified by subsequent prophets. (2) Our protection from erroneous doctrine lies in an overriding belief in continuing revelation to the current prophet.

President Harold B. Lee spoke of this by relating an experience:

"Years ago as a young missionary I visited Nauvoo and Carthage with my mission president, and we were holding a missionary meeting in the jail room where Joseph and Hyrum had met their deaths. The mission president related the historical events that led up to the martyrdom and then he closed with this very significant statement: 'When the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, there were many saints who died spiritually with Joseph.' So it was when Brigham Young died: so it was when John Taylor died. Do revelations given to President John Taylor, for example, have any more authority than something that comes from our president and prophet today? Some Church members died spiritually with Wilford Woodruff, with Lorenzo Snow, with Joseph F. Smith, with Heber J. Grant, with George Albert Smith. We have some today willing to believe someone who is dead and gone and to accept his words as having more authority than the words of a living authority today" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places* [1974], 153).

President Lee amplified this by telling of his response to a man who was disturbed at a new policy of the Church which was different from one established in the time of Joseph Smith. He said to this questioning brother:

"Have you ever thought that what was contrary to the order of heaven in 1840 might not be contrary to the order of heaven in 1960?' He had not thought of that. He again was following a dead prophet, and he was forgetting that there is a living prophet today. Hence the importance of our stressing that word *living*" (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 153).

### An ongoing stream of revelation

In summary, the Church is founded on continuing revelation to a current, living prophet. "Many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" have been revealed, and more are yet to be revealed through the living prophet. Beginning with Joseph Smith and continuing on to his successors as President of the Church, the ongoing stream of revelation has perfected our understanding of the gospel. The understanding of doctrines is more complete as taught by the Church today than at any prior time in this dispensation. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Gordon T. Watts

### Gratitude

As a young boy, life on our small family farm was heaven. Often in our humble home there were not as many shingles as we had roof. The rest-room facility was connected by a long path that required some advance planning, and sometimes my worn shirt had more buttonholes than buttons. The Saturday night bath in front of a warm stove,

where your body experienced both extremes in temperature, was a luxury.

Then something changed. I started school and began to notice possessions I had not known. Some had nice clothing, beautiful homes with all the modern conveniences, and drove newer automobiles. Many my age were not required to arise early and do chores before going to school, only to go home at night and do them all over again. While they were

popular and confident, I became backward and shy. Regretfully, I began to forget how happy I had been with my basket of blessings as I indulged in comparing their seemingly endless bushels to mine. Thus, the blinders to humility began distorting reality, giving way to ingratitude. The expectation that more is deserved can cause our plate of plenty to appear empty. Gratitude has many faces and takes on many forms. Failure to recognize the Lord for all we have will soon result in selfish behavior.

### **"But where are the nine?"**

The Savior, though always the giver, was seldom the receiver of gratitude.

"And as he [Christ] entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

"And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

"And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

"And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"<sup>1</sup>

Contemplating the Savior's question "But where are the nine?" gives cause for deep reflection. In President Hinckley's opening remarks during last April conference, he said:

"And so, my beloved brothers and sisters, let us rejoice together now as we celebrate with appreciation the wondrous doctrines and practices which have come as a gift from the Lord in this most glorious time of His work. . . . Let us ever be grateful for these most precious gifts and privileges and act well our part as those who love the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding all the "precious gifts and privileges" spoken of by our prophet, oftentimes we fail to recognize our abundant blessings. More importantly, some expressions of gratitude fall short of the Lord's expectations. "And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."<sup>3</sup>

### **Gratitude begins with attitude**

Gratitude begins with attitude. While to some every apple shines, to others the remaining blemishes after the polishing process are all that's visible. We must use caution not to be drawn into the growing populace of ungrateful people who have become calloused to blessings as they bicker in misery.

Joy and happiness are born of gratitude. Recently Sister Watts and I spent three years in another part of the world working with a very kind and gracious people. If worldly possessions equated to happiness, the majority of these Saints would be unhappy. Quite the contrary, gratitude abounds, resulting in a contagious display of rejoicing. It is evident that even though they live in a challenging environment with few advantages, they are a delightful people. A cheerfulness is generated by their gratitude for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the blessings derived from living the principles taught. One faithful district president expressed gratitude to have a bicycle for transportation to perform his calling. It seemed the more he pedaled, the happier he became. Perhaps there is a lesson here: if we are feeling ungrateful, we need to pedal a little faster. The depth and the willingness with which we serve is a direct reflection of our gratitude.

Elder James E. Talmage said, "Gratitude is twin sister to humility; pride is a foe to both."<sup>4</sup> Also, President James E. Faust has said, "A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness."<sup>5</sup>

### Gratitude in times of trial

In times of trial we can accept with gratefulness that which is to come, a gratitude for the blessings and gifts the Lord has in reserve for those who keep the commandments and serve Him in thanksgiving. An eternal friend and former neighbor who embraced the teachings of the gospel in our home so many years ago has recently felt the refiner's fire in the loss of his beloved companion. His recent words of indefinable gratitude for the gospel, temple covenants, and eternal marriage are engraved on my mind. In the passing of his sweet wife, this knowledge brings a comfort unknown to them before joining the Church. His words of "How can I ever thank you for sharing with our family this great eternal gift?" join with my own words of unspeakable gratitude to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, for the "precious gifts and privileges" offered to us all.

"And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glori-

ous; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more."<sup>6</sup> God is the gracious giver, and I testify of Him and of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Luke 17:12-17.
2. In Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 4-5; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 6.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 59:21.
4. "With the Voice of Thanksgiving," *Sunday Night Talks*, 2nd ed. (1931), 483.
5. In Conference Report, Apr. 1990, 110; or *Ensign*, May 1990, 86.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 78:19.

### President Monson

Elder Merrill C. Oaks of the Seventy has just spoken to us, followed by Elder Gordon T. Watts, also of the Seventy.

We shall now hear from Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### We are children of God

Recently I observed young men who attracted attention to themselves because of their extreme styles of dress and grooming. One made a revealing remark when he said, "I'm trying to find out who I really am." This occurred after I had come from a Church meeting where Primary children had sung "I Am a Child of God."<sup>1</sup> Such contrasting experiences emphasize the importance of knowing that we are literally children of God.

We are dual beings. Each soul is comprised of body and spirit,<sup>2</sup> both of which emanate from God. A firm understanding of body and spirit will shape our thoughts and deeds for good.

### The body

The marvel of our physical bodies is often overlooked. Who has not encountered feelings of low self-esteem because of physique or appearance? Many people wish their bodies could be more to their liking. Some with naturally straight hair want it curly. Others with curly hair want it straight. Occasionally some ladies, believing that "gentlemen prefer blonds," become "decided blonds."

Your body, whatever its natural gifts, is a magnificent creation of God.<sup>3</sup> It is a tabernacle of flesh—a temple for your spirit.<sup>4</sup> A study of your body attests to its divine design.

Its formation begins with the union of two reproductive cells—one from the

mother and one from the father. Together, these two cells contain all of the new individual's hereditary information, stored in a space so small it cannot be seen by the naked eye. Twenty-three chromosomes from each parent unite in one new cell. These chromosomes contain thousands of genes which determine all of the physical characteristics of the unborn person. Approximately 22 days after these two cells unite, a little heart begins to beat. At 26 days, blood begins to circulate. Cells multiply and divide. Some become eyes that see; others become ears that hear.

Each organ is a wondrous gift from God. The eye has a self-focusing lens. Nerves and muscles control two separate eyes to make a single three-dimensional image. The eyes are connected to the brain, which records the sights seen. No cords or batteries are needed.

Each ear is connected to compact equipment designed to convert sound waves into audible tones. An eardrum serves as a diaphragm. Minute ossicles amplify sound vibrations and transmit a signal via nerves to the brain, which senses and remembers the sounds.

The heart is an incredible pump. It has four delicate valves that control the direction of blood flow. These valves open and close more than 100,000 times a day—36 million times a year. Yet, unless altered by disease, they are able to withstand this stress almost indefinitely. No man-made material developed to date can be flexed so frequently and so long without breaking.

Each day an adult heart pumps enough fluid to fill a 2,000-gallon<sup>5</sup> tank. This work is equivalent to lifting a grown man<sup>6</sup> to the top of the Empire State Building while expending only about four watts of energy. At the crest of the heart is an electrical generator that transmits energy down special lines, causing myriads of muscle fibers to work together.

Much could be said about each of the other precious organs in the body. They function in a marvelous manner, beyond my time or ability to describe.

Other attributes of the body are equally amazing, though less evident. For example, backup is provided. Each *paired* organ has instant backup available from the other of the pair. *Single* organs, such as the brain, the heart, and the liver, are nourished by *two* routes of blood supply. This design protects the organ if harm should come to any one channel.

Think of the body's system of self-defense. To protect it from harm, the body perceives pain. In response to infection, it generates antibodies. They not only help to combat the immediate problem, but they persist to strengthen resistance to infection in the future. One day my attention was directed to some three-year-old children who had lapped up water from a street gutter. The number of germs they ingested must have been incalculable, but not one of those youngsters became ill. As soon as that dirty drink reached each little stomach, its hydrochloric acid went to work to treat the water and protect the life of the child.

The skin provides protection. It also warns against injuries that excessive heat or cold might cause. It even sends signals that indicate trouble elsewhere. With fever, the skin perspires. When one is frightened, it pales. When one is embarrassed, it blushes.

The body repairs itself. Broken bones mend and become strong once again. Skin lacerations heal themselves. A leak in the circulation can seal itself.

The body renews its own outdated cells. The average red blood cell, for instance, lives about 120 days. Then it is replaced by a newly regenerated cell.

The body regulates its own vital ingredients. Essential elements and chemical constituents are adjusted continuously. And regardless of wide fluctuations

in the temperature of the environment, the temperature of the body is carefully controlled within narrow bounds.

If these qualities of normal function, defense, repair, regeneration, and regulation were to prevail in perpetuity, life here would continue without limit. Mercifully, our Creator provided for aging and other processes which ultimately result in physical death. We often think of death as untimely or tragic. But death, like birth, is part of life. Scripture tells us that "it was not expedient that man should be reclaimed from this temporal death, for that would destroy the great plan of happiness."<sup>7</sup> To return to God through the gateway of death is a joy for those who love Him.<sup>8</sup>

When death claims an individual in the prime of life, we take comfort in knowing that the very laws which do not allow life to persist here are the same laws that will be implemented at the time of the Resurrection, when the body will be endowed with immortality.

### The spirit

Next I speak of the spirit. Prior to our mortal existence here, each spirit son and daughter lived with God. The spirit is eternal; it existed in innocence in the premortal realm<sup>9</sup> and will exist after the body dies.<sup>10</sup> The spirit provides the body with animation and personality.<sup>11</sup> "All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure."<sup>12</sup>

"The spirit of man [is] in the likeness of his person."<sup>13</sup> Jesus so explained as the brother of Jared viewed the Lord's premortal body:

"Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"... This body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to

be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh."<sup>14</sup>

Development of the spirit is of eternal consequence. The attributes by which we shall be judged one day are those of the spirit.<sup>15</sup> These include the virtues of integrity, compassion, love, and more.<sup>16</sup> Your spirit, by being housed in your body, is able to develop and express these attributes in ways that are vital to your eternal progression.<sup>17</sup>

Spirit and body, when joined together, become a living soul of supernal worth. Indeed, we are children of God—physically and spiritually.

### Physical limitations

For reasons usually unknown, some people are born with physical limitations. Specific parts of the body may be abnormal. Regulatory systems may be out of balance. And all of our bodies are subject to disease and death. Nevertheless, the gift of a physical body is priceless. Without it, we cannot attain a fulness of joy.<sup>18</sup>

A perfect body is not required to achieve a divine destiny. In fact, some of the sweetest spirits are housed in frail frames. Great spiritual strength is often developed by those with physical challenges precisely because they are challenged. Such individuals are entitled to all the blessings that God has in store for His faithful and obedient children.<sup>19</sup>

Eventually the time will come when each "spirit and . . . body shall be reunited again in . . . perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame."<sup>20</sup> Then, thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become perfected in Him.<sup>21</sup>

### Personal behavior

How should these truths influence our personal behavior? We should gratefully acknowledge God as our Creator. Otherwise, we would be as guilty as goldfish swimming in a bowl, oblivious to the

goodness of their provider. "Ye must give thanks unto God," said the Lord, "for whatsoever blessing ye are blessed with."<sup>22</sup> And we can practice virtue and holiness before Him continually.<sup>23</sup>

We will regard our body as a temple of our very own.<sup>24</sup> We will not let it be desecrated or defaced in any way.<sup>25</sup> We will control our diet and exercise for physical fitness.

Should not equal attention be paid to spiritual fitness?<sup>26</sup> Just as physical strength requires exercise, so spiritual strength requires effort. Among the most important of spiritual exercises is prayer. It engenders harmony with God and a desire to keep His commandments. Prayer is a key to wisdom, virtue, and humility.

We will be careful about which counsel we heed. Many so-called experts give advice for the body—without thought for the spirit. Anyone who accepts direction contrary to the Word of Wisdom, for example, forsakes a law revealed to bring both physical *and* spiritual blessings.<sup>27</sup> Some recommendations regarding use of our reproductive organs are based solely—and inadequately—upon physical considerations. Beware of such one-sided views! Paul taught that "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."<sup>28</sup>

That caution pertains to pornography, which is highly addictive. Scriptural warning is clear: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."<sup>29</sup> In time, addictions enslave *both* the body and the spirit. Full repentance from addiction is best accomplished in this life, while we still have a mortal body to help us.

As children of God, we should not let anything enter the body that might defile it. To allow sensors of sight, touch, or hearing to supply the brain with unclean memories is a sacrilege. We will cherish our chastity and avoid "foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown [us] in de-

struction and perdition."<sup>30</sup> We will "flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, [and] meekness"<sup>31</sup>—traits that edify the whole soul.

Who are we? We are children of God.<sup>32</sup> Our potential is unlimited. Our inheritance is sacred. May we always honor that heritage—in every thought and deed—I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## NOTES

1. See *Hymns*, no. 301.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:15.
3. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 64–69. The Psalmist stated: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . . For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" (Psalm 8:3–5; see also Hebrews 2:7, 9).
4. See 1 Corinthians 6:19.
5. About 7,570 liters.
6. Weighing 150 pounds (about 68.2 kilograms).
7. Alma 42:8; see also Alma 12:24–27.
8. The Psalmist expressed the viewpoint of Deity: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:38.
10. See Alma 40:11; Abraham 3:18.
11. See Job 32:8.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 131:7.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 77:2.
14. Ether 3:15–16.
15. The spirit, not the body, is the active, responsible component of the soul. Without the spirit, the body is dead (see James 2:26). It is the spirit, therefore, that chooses good or evil and will be held accountable for both the positive and negative attributes it possesses at the final judgment (see Alma 41:3–7).
16. Such as "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness,

godliness, charity, humility, [and] diligence" (D&C 4:6).

17. See 2 Nephi 2:11-16, 21-26; Moroni 10:33-34.

18. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:17.

19. See Abraham 3:25-26.

20. Alma 11:43; see also Alma 40:23; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Doctrine and Covenants 138:17.

21. See Moroni 10:32.

22. Doctrine and Covenants 46:32.

23. See Doctrine and Covenants 46:33.

24. See 1 Corinthians 3:16.

25. Referring to the human body, the Apostle Paul taught, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

26. See 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:9.

27. See Doctrine and Covenants 89:18-21; see also Romans 8:6; 2 Nephi 9:38-39; Doctrine and Covenants 29:34-35.

28. Romans 8:13.

29. Romans 6:12.

30. 1 Timothy 6:9.

31. 1 Timothy 6:11. Verse 12 continues: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life." That is our choice.

32. Looking up scriptural references that refer to *create* or *form* (or their derivatives), with either *man*, *men*, *male*, or *female* in the same verse, I found 55 instances that attest to our divine creation. One may represent the many that convey the same message: "The Gods took counsel among themselves and said: Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them" (Abraham 4:26-27).

The decision to believe our creation was divine must be based on spiritual evidence and not on physical evidence alone, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither

can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

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The choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

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### President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us, following which the choir sang "How Gentle God's Commands."

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Mormon Youth Chorus; the Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area; and the Tabernacle Choir; and their conductors and organists for the truly beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Tabernacle.

We also express appreciation to local and national press representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations and cable systems who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

We are grateful that Sister Inis Hunter, the wife of President Howard W. Hunter, has been able to be with us in this and other sessions.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet and President, will be our concluding speaker. Following President Hinckley's remarks, the choir will sing "Let My Heart Be Pure" and "Lord, I Would Follow Thee." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder D. Lee Tobler of the Seventy.

## President Gordon B. Hinckley

### Reflect on messages and respond to them

Just a word in conclusion. We've been here a long time for those in the Tabernacle seated on the hard benches. I look forward to our holding conference in the new building, where the chairs will be upholstered.

We have had a wonderful conference. The Lord has blessed us, and we are deeply grateful. As we return to our homes, may we reflect upon the things which we have heard. Where there is need for reformation in our lives, may we make those adjustments which will lead to such. Where we have been stirred in our hearts, may we respond to the Spirit which has touched us. Where we have been lax in our duty, may we have the self-discipline to stand tall and do what is expected of us.

### Report on construction of temples

I am pleased to report, my brethren and sisters, concerning the program of constructing smaller temples which has been mentioned in this conference many times. We dedicated the first of these in Monticello, Utah, a few months ago. We built a temple there so that we might learn from it. We have learned a few things, and we have been deeply gratified by the response of the Saints in that area and by their great enthusiasm for the beautiful structure which has come into their midst.

We will dedicate a number of new temples beginning the first of the year. Some of these will be larger, some smaller. During the last conference I expressed the hope that we would build 30 new temples during the next two years. I am sure that many thought this was just wishful dreaming on my part. It seemed totally unrealistic.

I am grateful to be able to say that our building people—our architects, our

engineers, our designers and furnishings experts—advise me that in all likelihood we will have 100 or more temples operating in the year 2000, nearly twice the number we have today. I assure you that nobody is sleeping on the job—no one who has anything to do with this immense project. I speak of these temples as smaller temples. Actually they do not look small; they look large. They are beautiful. They are built of the best materials and in the best fashion of which we know. Each will be a house of the Lord, dedicated to His holy purposes.

We shall not stop at these. We shall go on building. We know there are so very many locations where they are needed in order that you, the faithful Saints of this Church, may go to receive your own blessings and to extend those blessings to those who have passed beyond the veil of death. We pray that our people will be worthy to use them. Where repentance is needed, now is the time to turn about and prepare ourselves for their use.

### The true and living Church

My brothers and sisters, these are momentous times in which we are living as Saints of the Most High. With the generous blessing of the Lord, with His revealed will before us, with the faithful Saints throughout the world, we find it possible to do that which was thought to be impossible only a very short time ago.

I have now been an officer in this Church for a very long time. I am an old man who cannot deny the calendar. I'm getting worried about that anatomy lesson Brother Nelson just gave us. I have lived long enough and served in enough different capacities to have removed from my mind, if such were necessary, any doubt of the divinity of this, the work of God. We respect those of other churches. We desire their friendship and

hope to render meaningful service with them. We know they all do good, but we unabashedly state—and this frequently brings criticism upon us—that this is the true and living Church of our Father in Heaven and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Tribute and benediction**

Now before I sit down, I want to pay a moment's tribute to this great choir to which we've listened today. They are magnificent. They are doing a great work. They are better than they've ever been, and they must go on improving. Their best today will not be good enough tomorrow. Keep it up, dear friends.

Let us go on rearing our children in righteousness and truth. Let us be good neighbors and good friends, loving and reaching out to those not of our faith as well as those who are of our faith. May the smiles of heaven rest upon you, my beloved associates, as I leave with you my witness and my testimony and my love for each of you wherever you may be across this broad world is my humble prayer and word of benediction in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir sang "Let My Heart Be Pure" and "Lord, I Would Follow Thee."

Elder D. Lee Tobler offered the benediction.

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## **SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE MUSIC**

The Mormon Youth Chorus, directed by Robert C. Bowden, provided music for the Saturday morning session of the conference. Bonnie Goodliffe was the organist.

A Young Women choir from the Murray, Utah, area provided music for the Saturday afternoon session. Vickie Belnap directed the choir, and Linda Margetts was the organist.

A combined men's choir from the Tabernacle Choir and Mormon Youth Chorus provided music for the general priesthood session. Jerold Ottley and Robert Bowden directed the choir, and Richard Elliott was the organist.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Craig Jessop and Jerold Ottley, provided music for the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. Clay Christiansen and John Longhurst were the organists.

Throughout the conference sessions, prelude, postlude, and interlude music and accompaniments on the Tabernacle organ were played by John Longhurst, Clay Christiansen, Richard Elliott, Bonnie Goodliffe, and Linda Margetts.

**F. Michael Watson**  
Clerk of the Conference

A

- Amorím, Elder Athos M.** ..... 37  
Obedience and service; An example of service; Desire to obey and serve God

B

- Ballard, Elder M. Russell** ..... 4  
Extraordinary temple-building effort; An urgency in the work; Are we keeping pace? We must work harder and smarter; Use ward council to nurture converts; Use councils to bless individual lives; Examine commitment to the gospel; Focus on things that matter most
- Bateman, Elder E. Ray** ..... 35  
Pearls from the sand; Be friendly and share the gospel; A conversion story; Renew commitment to missionary work
- Burton, Bishop H. David** ..... 8  
A season of opportunity; A season to reverence the Sabbath day; A season of temple service; A season to reach out; Blessings of reaching out

C

- Christensen, Elder Val R.** ..... 38  
Overcoming discouragement; Change your attitude; Accept help from others; Develop trust in the Lord
- Christofferson, Elder D. Todd** ..... 53  
Elders quorum helps a brother; The priesthood quorum; A class; A fraternity; A service unit

E

- Eyring, Elder Henry B.** ..... 40  
A voice of warning; Mother's warning; Responsibility to warn our neighbors; Sweet moments of missionary work; The need to warn others is real; Do not procrastinate warning others; Love comes first; Be better examples; Invite with testimony; The Lord's assurance; Choose the way of eternal life

F

- Faust, President James E. (priesthood session)** ..... 58  
Visit to World War I sites in France; Priesthood is the greatest power source; Priesthood power comes from faithfulness; The refining trials of Zion's Camp; Caring for the poor is a priesthood duty; Priesthood duties of young men; Be true to this great trust

**Faust, President James E. (Sunday morning session) . . . . . 73**

Grandfather's faith in paying tithing; A key to opening the windows of heaven; Paying tithing brings true prosperity; Blessings of tithing settlement; Administering tithing funds; Tithing and temples; Other offerings; Sacrifice is necessary to develop faith; Sacrifice brings protection from evil; The Savior's ultimate offering

**G****General Authorities Present . . . . . 1****General Priesthood Session . . . . . 48****H****Haight, Elder David B. . . . . 45**

Sustaining the prophets; Sustaining of the Prophet Joseph; Sustaining the Twelve in 1844; Sustaining the First Presidency in 1847; "He that loseth his life for my sake . . ."; "I am a child of God"

**Hales, Elder Robert D. . . . . 15**

The healing process of the soul; Pondering is important for healing; Exercise faith, study, and pray; Pondering brings gratitude and peace; Repentance brings spiritual healing; The Savior's pain; Alma the Younger's pain and joy; Understanding the pains of mortality; The Lord is the ultimate caregiver; Draw near to the Savior

**Halverson, Elder Ronald T. . . . . 102**

The gospel brings a woman peace and joy; "In me ye might have peace"; Miracle of forgiveness brings peace; Share testimony to help others find peace

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Saturday morning session) . . . . . 3**

Welcome to conference; Construction of new assembly building; Church members are one great family

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (priesthood session) . . . . . 67**

To the young men; Pledge of young men in California; Importance of missionary service; To the older men; Get our houses in order; Warning against consumer debt; Live within your means; Become self-reliant; Free yourselves from bondage of debt

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday morning session) . . . . . 90**

Questions that people ask about us; The Mormon doctrine of Deity; Attitude toward homosexuality; Position on abortion; Position on polygamy; Reasons for the Church's growth; Position on spouse and child abuse; Financing the Church's operations; This is God's work

**Hinckley, President Gordon B. (Sunday afternoon session) . . . . . 115**

Reflect on messages and respond to them; Report on construction of temples; The true and living Church; Tribute and benediction

**Holland, Elder Jeffrey R. . . . . 98**

Personal purity; A river of fire; Why is sexual purity so important? The doctrine of the human soul; The ultimate symbol of total union; A symbol of the relationship with God; Control sacred procreative powers; The peace and renewal of repentance; Glorify God in body and spirit

**J****Jensen, Sister Virginia U. . . . . 12**

Love and reverence for prophets; "Come, listen to a prophet's voice"; A photographer's experience; Blessings of having living prophets; The prophet will never lead us astray; Lessons taught in the proclamation on the family; Heed the words of the living prophet

**M****Maxwell, Elder Neal A. . . . . 77**

The need for ultimate hope; Hope, faith, charity, and patience; The anchor of the soul; Increasing despair and cynicism; Difficulties stir some people to repent; Qualities of real hope; Responses of the truly hopeful; Reach out with hope

**Monson, Elder Earl M. . . . . 104**

Establishing the Church; Comparison with building temples; Strength based on personal testimony; Choose the better part

**Monson, President Thomas S. (priesthood session) . . . . . 62**

A boy's love for President Hinckley; A son watches his father's example; Guide and inspire young men; Reaching the mind and heart of a boy; A bishopric member trains and inspires; Good advice: never lie; Purposes of the Aaronic Priesthood; Missionaries answer the Lord's call; A missionary helps a German woman; Service in Rarotonga; Testimony of the Savior

**Monson, President Thomas S. (Saturday morning session) . . . . . 20**

One leper returns to give thanks; "In every thing give thanks"; A boy expresses gratitude for a bicycle; "Count your many blessings"; Express thanks to parents; Express thanks to teachers; Express thanks to peers; A miracle at Murray High School; Compassionate response to girls' deaths; Counsel at the funeral; One source of true peace; Words of comfort about children who die; "Joy cometh in the morning"

**Music, Summary of Conference . . . . . 116**

## N

- Nelson, Elder Russell M.** ..... 110  
 We are children of God; The body; The spirit; Physical limitations; Personal behavior

## O

- Oaks, Elder Dallin H.** ..... 48  
 The Aaronic Priesthood and the sacrament; Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood; Baptism and the sacrament; The Holy Ghost and the sacrament; Repentance and the sacrament; The ministering of angels; Do not do anything that would distract; Be clean and reverent; Speak the sacrament prayers clearly; Be orderly; Be well groomed and modestly dressed; Be worthy to participate; Sing the sacrament hymn; These ordinances are vital
- Oaks, Elder Merrill C.** ..... 106  
 Continuing revelation is essential; Revelation continues today; To those who are disturbed by changes; An ongoing stream of revelation

## P

- Packer, President Boyd K.** ..... 27  
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- Perry, Elder L. Tom** ..... 95  
 Counseling grandchildren at Bear Lake; Appreciate the land where you live; Self-esteem; Love of family; Love of God and obedience to His law; Personal testimony
- Priesthood Session, General** ..... 48

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- Richards, Elder H. Bryan** ..... 56  
 Prepare young men to serve missions; Responsibilities of parents and leaders; Teach the worth of the soul; Importance of missionary service

## S

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<b>Scott, Elder Richard G.</b> .....	86
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<b>Sorensen, Elder David E.</b> .....	80
This Church will fill the world; Hastening of temple building; Temples help us come to Christ; Temples remind us of Christ; Ordinances are centered in Christ; The gates of heaven are open	
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